

Israel jails Palestinian official for kidnapping

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli court Monday sentenced a Palestinian security official to five years in jail for kidnapping and torturing a Palestinian whom he suspected of being an Israeli informer, an Israeli official said. Moussa Moustapha, a senior official in the Palestinian security service, was convicted of ordering the abduction of an Arab resident of Arab east Jerusalem and taking him to a Palestinian prison in Jericho earlier this year, said courts spokesman Moshe Goral. No Palestinian reaction was immediately available. Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians consider their capital of a future state, was occupied by Israel in 1967. Israel is sensitive to efforts by Palestinian National Authority to establish a foothold there. No further details on the case were available.

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Addressing closing session at MENA

Regent calls for liberalisation of Palestinian economy, end to Iraqi people's suffering 'from sanctions'

DOHA (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has called for the liberalisation of the Palestinian economy and freedom of the Palestinian people so that they can live in an independent state on their national soil.

The Regent also called for an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people expressing hope that the present U.N.-Iraq crisis will end through peaceful means.

The Regent's call came in an address delivered to the closing session of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) summit in Doha, read out on his behalf by Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani.

With reference to the MENA conference, the Regent said that it coincided with serious developments in the region at a time when the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations are deadlocked and the Palestinian people's economic conditions deteriorating.

"We call for the liberalisation of the Palestinian economy from all restrictions as called for by the international economic philosophy and if progress on the political level is hampered, the Palestinian economy should be freed and the Palestinians should be able to seek their way out of the present difficulties and find solutions that would raise their standard of living and guarantee the basic elements of a decent life," said the Regent adding that "the Palestinian people deserve to enjoy freedom, independence and the chance to build their own institutions on their national soil."

Referring to Iraq, the Regent said: "We also turn our eyes towards the Iraqi people and their suffering resulting from the sanctions and economic embargo and we hope that the present crisis will end peacefully and through diplomatic means. It is unreasonable to see 22 million Iraqis subjected to sanctions; lacking medicine and food. We stand by our Arab brothers in Kuwait, Qatar and other Gulf states who have voiced their rejection of the use of force and hope for a just and peaceful end to the crisis."

Referring to the current developments, he said: "The conference took place at a time when the region witnessed more acts of violence, bloodshed and victims falling in Egypt. We denounce these

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The plenaries and thematic sessions that took place during the conference were indication that governments of the MENA region have embarked on economic reforms aimed at enhancing the role of the private sector in running the economy.

Participants from the industrialised North commended the steps the MENA states were taking to liberalise their markets, including

economic growth beyond the year 2000."

"These acts should open our eyes to many facts and stress that Arab citizens aspire for peace, security and tranquillity and seek an end to war and conflicts so that their

MENA participants call for progress on all tracks of peace

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

DOHA — Expressing strong commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, participants at the Fourth Middle East and North Africa (MENA) conference held in Doha this week, resolved Tuesday that peace in the region must be achieved on the basis of the Madrid peace formula of land-for-peace and United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

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King, Netanyahu meet in London for 'talks on Iraqi-U.N. standoff'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amid rising tensions in the Middle East and strained Jordanian-Israeli relations, His Majesty King Hussein and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were to hold talks last night near London, for the first time following the Mossad's bungled assassination attempt on Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al in Amman less than two months ago.

A Palace official confirmed Tuesday that the meeting was to take place. Details of the talks, however, were not readily available and Jordanian officials contacted did not disclose any further information on the event.

According to the Israeli prime minister's office, the meeting was set to discuss the Iraqi-U.N. crisis. International news agencies



reported Tuesday that King Hussein would be stressing Israeli restraint in the current Iraqi-U.N. standoff.

The meeting of the two leaders comes at a time of a virtual standstill in the peace process. While attending the MENA Economic Summit in Doha, the Jordanian delegation was

openly critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians in particular.

King Hussein has levelled strong criticism against Prime Minister Netanyahu's policies with regards to the Palestinians in the past year. Subsequent to the assassination attempt, however, Jordanian-Israeli relations reached an all-time low, with the Jordanian regime expressing its strongest condemnation of Israel's policies.

Various Israeli officials have recently voiced the possibility of an Israeli military strike against Iraqi targets should tension with Iraq escalate. Talk of a "preemptive strike" by the Jewish state against Iraqi weapons and missile sites has been hinted at by Israeli officials and the media.

Sudan's parliament calls on government to reciprocate harsh U.S. sanctions

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese parliament unanimously condemned Monday recent trade and economic sanctions imposed by Washington on Sudan and called on the government to reciprocate against the United States.

This should include "restricting movements of American officials in Sudanese territories and ports and of American individuals serving with institutions and non-governmental organisations operating in Sudan."

The national assembly has also demanded measures for "freezing" the "suspicious

U.S. role in the peace process in Sudan, arguing that it "has lost its credibility."

The parliament also called for controlling of "unlicensed flying" of U.S. planes over Sudanese airspace.

But it rejected demands by some members for a ban on exporting Sudanese "Arabic gum" to the U.S., closing down U.S. companies, particularly Pepsi and Coca Cola, operating in Sudan and stopping young Sudanese emigrating to the U.S.

The governor of the Bank of Sudan, Abdullah Hassan Ahmad, told parliament, meanwhile, that since the U.S. sanctions no transfers

had been moved through U.S. clearing houses and bank accounts had been opened in currencies other than the dollar, such as Swiss francs.

Mr. Ahmad described the freeze of assets as of "slight effect" on the Sudanese economy, noting that the sanctions do not include the private banks.

Imposing the curbs, Washington said it was punishing the Islamist regime in Khartoum for supporting terrorism and for waging war against Christians in the south of the vast African country.

Jewish settlers building new apartment block in Hebron

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Jewish settlers have begun work on the foundations of a new settlement in the Palestinian city of Hebron.

The settlement will contain six units with a total floor area of about 1,000 square metres, said Ahmad Tibi, an adviser to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. The building, to be called Beit Nahum, would be in one of the Jewish settlements near the town's central market, Mr. Tibi told

Israel's Channel 2 TV.

The TV showed work taking place on the building's foundations.

A spokesman for the settlers, Noam Arnon, confirmed the building plan. "We hope it will be built, yes," he said.

The Palestinians have been calling for a halt to all construction in Jewish settlements. The United States has also called for a "time-out" in building activity in the settlements, but Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu has so far not complied.

Hebron has been the scene of recurrent friction between Jewish settlers and their Palestinian neighbours. About 400 settlers live in the city, surrounded by over 130,000 Arabs.

Most of the city was handed to the Palestinian National Authority in January, but Israel continues to control the downtown area where the settlers, as well as thousands of Palestinians, live.

Lebanese party advocating 'Greater Syria' attacks Israeli-allied militia post

BEIRUT (AFP) — Guerrillas of the National Syrian Social Party (NSSP) fired mortars Tuesday on a post of Israel's allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia in Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone" in southern Lebanon, an SLA source said.

Prior to 1990, the group launched numerous anti-Israeli operations as part of the National Resistance Front, which included a number of leftist secular parties.

Since then, the resistance to Israel here has been mainly led by Muslim Shiite

groups, mainly the Iranian-backed Hizbollah but also the pro-Syrian Amal movement.

All Lebanese militias were disarmed after the end of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, except for Hizbollah and Amal.

On Nov. 3, Hizbollah — after its leader visited Iran — called on Lebanese of all religions and political affiliations to take part in the fight against the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon.

Israel occupies the zone to ward off cross-border attacks on its northern territory.

Aziz flies to Moscow in sudden change of plans Russia, Iraq forge plan to resolve crisis

Combined agency dispatches

PRESIDENT BORIS Yeltsin and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz on Tuesday worked out a possible solution to the stand-off over U.N. weapons inspections, Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov said.

Speaking on ORT Television, Mr. Primakov said "a plan has been worked out which, we think, will avert an armed confrontation and resolve this crisis," although he did not go into specifics.

The plan included "Iraq complying with U.N. resolutions" said Mr. Primakov, adding that "at the same time the work of the Special Commission must continue."

Mr. Primakov said the plan was the fruit of personal contacts between Mr. Yeltsin and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who met in Moscow on Tuesday.

"Yeltsin sent a message a few days ago to Hussein which contained a plan for a political solution to the crisis," Mr. Primakov said, adding that "this morning Aziz arrived with the reply."

The Russian foreign minister said Mr. Yeltsin had ordered him to actively seek solutions to the crisis "and told me to try and meet the foreign ministers of Britain, the United States and France."

"If physically I cannot manage it I will contact them personally by telephone," Mr. Primakov said.

Pentagon sources in Washington, meanwhile, told CNN that a U.S.-manned spy plane flew over central Iraq without incident, despite an Iraqi threat to shoot it down. The reconnaissance plane supports U.N. arms monitoring on the ground.

Mr. Aziz, who made a

(Continued on page 7)



Russian President Boris Yeltsin shakes hands with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz before their meeting Tuesday (Reuters photo)

Egypt's interior minister resigns as result of massacre; Mubarak admits security failure

LUXOR (AFP) — Egyptian Interior Minister Hassan Al Ali resigned on Tuesday following an attack by Islamist militants in Luxor which killed 68 people, including 58 tourists, sources close to the president's office said.

The head of the state security services, General Habib Al Adeli, was appointed as new interior minister the same day.

General Ali was appointed to head the interior ministry in 1993, one year after Islamist militants determined to set up an Islamist state in Egypt launched a violent anti-government campaign.

During a visit on Tuesday to the site of the massacre, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak pledged to step up

security.

President Mubarak admitted that the security services in Luxor had failed to protect visitors to the southern resort's archaeological sites and described security measures as a "joke."

"There were no security people here. This is a tourist region and you are telling me the police were two kilometres away? This is a joke," President Mubarak told security officials in front of reporters.

"What security? You have failed," the president said on the site of Monday's carnage outside the ancient Pharaonic temple of Hatshepsut in Luxor's Valley of the Queens.

"We are going to take high

security measures," President Mubarak said, adding that a security plan would be drawn up within 24 hours to fill the "gaps."

He also charged that the assailants were "criminals not linked to Islam."

Egypt's main Islamist group, the Jamaa Islamiyah, claimed responsibility for the attack which left 58 mainly Swiss, Japanese and British tourists dead.

"There is nothing called Jamaa Islamiyah. They are all criminals pushed from outside by some heads who are in some countries whose names I don't want to mention," President Mubarak said.

Egypt has repeatedly accused Western nations of

providing haven to Islamists wanted in Egypt in connection with a bloody anti-government campaign launched in 1992 to set up an Islamist state.

"The entire world must cooperate and stand up to terrorism," President Mubarak said.

On Monday, President Mubarak ordered Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri to carry out an urgent investigation into the Luxor attack, the worst ever in Egypt, and report back in 24 hours.

Another Islamist organisation, Al Jihad, warned in a statement on Tuesday that it would also carry out attacks on tourists.

Israelis arrested for hanging anti-Arab posters

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Two right-wing Israeli militants were arrested Tuesday for hanging posters calling for the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories and for attacks against the political left. The two are members of the outlawed, anti-Arab Kach movement formed by Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was assassinated in New York Nov. 4, 1990 by an Arab. Thousands of posters were hung throughout Jerusalem in recent days announcing a memorial ceremony — later Tuesday for Kahane — on the anniversary of his death according to the Hebrew calendar.

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Bar-Illan: PNA behind calls for Israel's destruction

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A senior aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on Tuesday of organising pro-Iraq street protests which featured calls for Baghdad to attack and destroy Israel.

"There's no doubt that the demonstrations for Saddam's benefit were done at least with the support of the Palestinian Authority and maybe were organised by it," said David Bar-Illan, Mr. Netanyahu's media advisor, referring to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"We are very worried by the Palestinian support for Iraq and the call, actually, for the destruction of Israel," Bar-Illan said on Israel Radio.

"The conclusion we reached a long time ago is that the Palestinian Authority doesn't want to educate the Palestinian people to support peace, not in the kindergartens and not in the universities," Mr. Bar-Illan said.

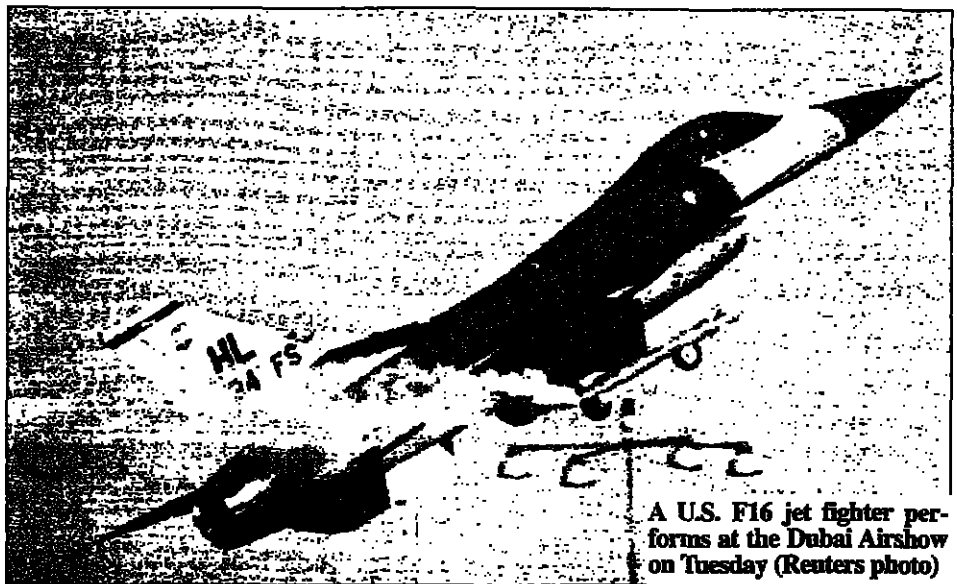
Palestinian groups have held a series of pro-Iraq demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the United States threatened retaliation after Iraq refused last month to accept U.S. members of a U.N. task force with finding and destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

AI criticises world community for indifference to suffering of Algerians

AMMAN (J.T.) — "The civilian population in Algeria is increasingly caught up in a growing spiral of violence, which in the past year has reached unprecedented levels. Up to 80,000 people have been brutally killed since the beginning of the conflict in 1992. In the past year violence has taken a new and terrifying turn with the massacre of thousands of civilians," Amnesty International (AI) said in a press release yesterday.

AI said human rights abuses by security forces, state-armed militias, and armed groups calling themselves "Islamic groups" are increasingly widespread. Killings, torture, "disappearances", abduction and death threats have been part of daily life in Algeria in the past few years.

The international community has turned its back on the Algerian human rights tragedy. Such indifference in the face of so much horror is an abdication of their responsibility towards the Algerian people," Pierre Sane, Secretary General of Amnesty International said.



UAE likely to buy 20 to 30 French-built Mirage jet fighters

DUBAI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is likely to order 20 to 30 French-built Mirage 2000-9 jet fighters in the next two months, according to a top official of the UAE air force.

He added that the UAE could also make "in the first half of next year" a decision on acquiring 80 new-generation polyvalent combat aircraft which it wants to give to its air force at the start of the next decade.

Iraq winner in arms standoff — papers

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has scored a "resounding political and diplomatic triumph" in the three-week-old crisis over U.N. arms inspections, Iraqi newspapers said on Tuesday.

"What has happened to America and Britain," the government newspaper Al Jumhuriya said in a front-page editorial entitled "who wins the battle?"

"If America attacks Iraq, it will face severe condemnation from various world countries... if it retreats and brokers an agreement through the U.N. or directly with Iraq, this means victory of peace and dialogue," said the editorial, written by editor-in-chief, Salah Al Mulki.

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The natural evolution of the UAE's air force requires the delivery of 20 to 30 Mirage 2000, the deputy commander in chief of the UAE air force, Khaled Ben Abdullah, told the official Abu Dhabi newspaper Al Itihad.

He said the "decision concerning the purchase and number of aircraft will be taken in the next months," without providing details.

Mr. Abdullah said the purchase would be part of a contract worth \$2.5 billion for the modernisation of the UAE's air force.

Arafat's health problems again raise question of successor

By Elias Zanamiri in Jerusalem

PALESTINIAN OFFICIALS in public have remained silent and preferred not to comment on press reports, mostly coming from Israeli papers, that a power struggle has already started with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

"I do not see any reason why should we busy ourselves with this gossip," said a senior member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. He added that the PNA laws are very clear in stating that once PNA President Yasser Arafat disappears from the political scene, the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) would take his post for an interim period of two months. In other words, the Palestinians already have a replacement for Mr. Arafat, and that is Ahmad Qorei (also known as Abu Ala).

But Palestinian spokesmen have ridiculed reports of Mr. Arafat's ailing health condition and blamed such reports to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his media advisor in person, David Bar Ilan.

Some of the reports hinted that Jibril Rajoub, commander of the Preventive Security in the West Bank, is one of the candidates to succeed Mr. Arafat but according to PLC member Hatem Abdul Qader, Colonel Rajoub "is a military man and he cannot run for presidency unless he quits his job."

Col. Rajoub himself has become a centre of debate with Fateh, the mainstream PLO movement, following a decision taken recently by the movement's Revolutionary Council to freeze his membership in the council for 45 days.

No details were available on why the decision was taken but sources within Fateh said that Col. Rajoub had built up a number of foes within Fateh and in face of reports on Mr. Arafat's state of health.

Palestinian sources said the decision to freeze Col. Rajoub's membership was taken by a special committee appointed by President Arafat in order to calm down power struggles in Fateh and in face of reports on Mr. Arafat's state of health.

Mr. Abdul Qader and another PLC member, Hussam Khader, had recently visited Tunis where they met with PLO Political Department head Farouk Qaddumi to discuss with him future of the Palestinian power struggle after Mr. Arafat.

Mr. Qaddumi, who has refrained from coming to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) areas out of his opposition to the Oslo accords, was quoted as saying that he would prefer to see separate elections conducted to choose the president of the PNC on one hand and the PLO head on the other. At the moment, Mr. Arafat holds both positions but many Palestinian believe that none of the current leaders is

popular enough to succeed Mr. Arafat in both of them.

Besides, Abdul Qader believes the PLO should remain the political body that represents the Palestinians abroad and the one with whom Israel should negotiate the final status of the Palestinian territories. He said that Mr. Qaddumi is the most appropriate candidate to become the head of the PLO Executive Committee.

Other candidates whose names are later mentioned as potential successors to Mr. Arafat include Mahmoud Abbas, Abu Mazen, who is sometimes referred to as Man Number Two in the Palestinian leadership. Mr. Mazen has been very careful lately and has not given any statement that would make him involved in the present power struggle within the rank and file of the PNA.

The question of who will succeed Arafat is as old as the PLO itself. But lately, many reports spoke of the Parkinson's disease, a chronic ailment of the nervous system.

The disease expresses itself, among other things, in the form of a "masked face" (a face without expression) and with shaky body parts.

With the Palestinian media trying to keep away of this sensitive issue, Israeli press has brought extensive reports on his health condition. But according to intelligence experts in Israel, Mr. Arafat's life is not in danger. From conclusions reached recently in Israel's intelligence unit, it

appears Mr. Arafat is suffering from nervous system damage incurred during a plane crash in the early 1990s.

Following the accident, Mr. Arafat suffered a stroke. Surgery following the crash relieved some of the blood leaking into his brain, but then he had to undergo similar surgery shortly afterwards.

The visible external phenomenon, including the light shaking of one hand and one leg, shaking lips, a lack of concentration, a sideward glance and a lack of control over his facial muscles are attributed to the same nervous system damage. Many believe that since Mr. Arafat, 68, arrived in the territories, he has been under severe pressure, having to deal with much more than he did back in Tunis.

Close aides to Mr. Arafat admit that the president, to a considerable extent, does not have the capabilities he once had, but still they insist that his health situation is normal.

"He is much less patient, more edgy. He doesn't have the strength for conflict he once had in the past and he is much more exhausted," one aide said.

Nabil Shaath, Mr. Arafat's close adviser, said that "whoever works 22 hours a day cannot be sick. It would be enough if you knew his daily schedule for the last two days to understand a sick man wouldn't be able to handle this pace."

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PROGRAMME TWO
14:10.....Jonny Quest
14:30.....Super Dave
15:00.....Secrets of Treasure Island
15:30.....Spell Binder
15:40.....Monsters Today
16:10.....Border Town
16:30.....Neighbours
17:00.....French Programmes
19:00.....News in French
19:30.....News Headlines
19:35.....Doc. — High Tech Culture
20:00.....Comedy — Some One Like Me
20:30.....Challenges
21:10.....Kung Fu
22:00.....News in English
22:30.....Land's End
23:15.....American Gothic

PRAYER TIMES
04:42.....Fajr
06:03.....(Sunrise)Dhuha
11:21.....Dhuhr
14:14.....'Asr
16:39.....Maghreb
17:59.....'Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

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Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440. De la Salle Church Tel. 661757. Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366. Anglican Church Tel. 652826. Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331. Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261. St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751. Amman International Church Tel. 5516245. Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328. German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404. The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932. Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691. The Evangelical Social Church in Amman Tel. 811295. English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.		ing to central areas. In Agaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds southerly moderate, and seas rough. Amman10/18 Agaba14/27 Deserts08/20 Jordan Valley13/24 Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 19, Agaba 28 Humidity readings: Amman 46 per cent, Agaba 26 per cent.		USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY Dr. Abbas Al Hakim885446 Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab602507 Dr. Ayman Al Moutaseb 875748 Dr. Jamal Jbarah847351 Firas pharmacy661912 Ferdows pharmacy890280 Al Asema pharmacy637055 Al Salam pharmacy636730 Yacoub pharmacy644945 Shmeisani pharmacy 637660 Nairokh pharmacy623672 Najib pharmacy847632 IRBID: Dr. Fawzi Abul Hajja252970 Al Quds pharmacy(—) ZARQA: Dr. Ya'qub Al Khatib 991772 Khalifeh pharmacy985417	
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FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (52700) or 08(53250).		ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights 07:25.....Damascus (RJ) 08:35.....Larnaca (RJ) 08:35.....Jeddah (RJ) 10:40 Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha 1500 New York, Amsterdam (RJ) 16:35.....Frankfurt (RJ) 16:50.....Istanbul (RJ) 17:05.....Paris (RJ) 17:45.....Madrid, Geneva (RJ) 17:50.....Brussels, Vienna (RJ) 18:10.....London, Berlin (RJ) 18:10.....Rome (RJ) 23:10.....Beirut (RJ)		DEPARTURES 08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 09:45.....Rome (RJ) 10:40.....Berlin, London (RJ) 11:00.....Istanbul (RJ)	

Wednesday, November 19, 1997
community for
ring of Algerian

Home News

Jordan Times, Wednesday, November 19, 1997

3



SPEAKER DELIVERS LECTURE: Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament, Rifai Tawil, delivers a lecture at the Jubilee School on leadership. Mr. Rifai briefed the attendees on the features and requirements that decision-makers should possess in order to carry out their national duties properly (Petra photo)

Prince Firas opens conference examining future role of nursing

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd opened a nursing conference in Amman Tuesday by stressing Jordan's continued drive, "both in outlook and in action, to build a brighter future for the coming generations in the next millennium."

Standing in for Her Majesty Queen Noor at the opening session of the Third International Nursing Conference, entitled "Nursing: Towards the Year 2000," Prince Firas said "a better place [for humanity] can be reached with collective action and global goodwill."

"The public health challenges of our changing world: deepening pockets of poverty, chronic malnutrition, AIDS and other infectious diseases, urban stress, land degradation and deforestation, ozone depletion and global warming, civil wars and wide-scale rape as a weapon of war, demand global resolve, immediate action, and sustainable development," he said.

Prince Firas, who is the health secretary of His

Majesty King Hussein, said Jordan has been "at the forefront of countries searching for a stable and peaceful Middle East, free of war, misery, and conflict, a Middle East able to focus its efforts on developing the potential of its peoples."

Referring to health care, he said nursing is an integral part of health care and is essential for both "caring" and "curing." He expressed hope that all the themes included in the agenda will be covered in-depth.

Italian ambassador Francesco Cerulli addressed the meeting, stating that his country has consistently been one of the major donors to Jordan, especially in the health sector.

He noted that Italy has been providing technical assistance to the "clinical instructors" project, which he said has been successfully operating for over ten years in the major Jordanian public hospitals by contributing to the development of continuing education and upgrading of nursing in the country.

"I would like to recall on this occasion the new hospital in Karak, which was inaugurated last year, and the large number of scholarships that have been granted to Jordanian doctors to allow them to study and specialise in Italian universities," said the ambassador.

He said he was sure that "the Italian presence in this sector will continue and that we will be able to share our experiences and our capabilities with the relevant Jordanian organisations."

The two-day conference is scheduled to discuss topics related to nursing in the coming century, including modern research work in nursing, promoting the profession, and other issues.

The delegates attending the meetings at the University of Jordan represent Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria, Iraq, South Africa, Palestine, the U.S., the Philippines, Italy, Pakistan, Oman, Iran, Indonesia, Bahrain, Sweden, Canada, the U.K., Lebanon, and Switzerland, in addition to Jordan.

NCP head announces formation of second centrist parliamentary bloc

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — With less than two weeks until the convening of Parliament, expected for Nov. 29, a second centrist bloc, gathering around 20 deputies, was announced yesterday.

The bloc, named Al Wifaq (The Accord), "aims to enhance democracy and respect of the people's right of free expression, as well as secure the [bloc] members' consensus on national issues," National Constitutional Party (NCP) Secretary General Abdul Hadi Majali was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying.

According to Petra, Mr. Majali pledged that Al Wifaq "will try to find solutions to outstanding issues of public concern and submit them to Parliament in order to make them priorities on the government's agenda."

The establishment of the

bloc was announced following a meeting at Parliament earlier yesterday attended by, among others, NCP Deputy Secretary General Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh (Irbid), Mohammad Thweib (Amman 2nd District), Abdullah Jazi (Southern Bedouins), Mifleh Rubelmi (Jerash), Noman Ghweiri (Zarqa), Ghazi Obaidat (Ramtha and Bani Kinaneh), and Rashed Baraiseh (Amman 1st District).

Mr. Majali reportedly said the bloc will meet in a few days to elect a spokesperson, a secretary, and a president. He also added that contacts with other deputies interested in joining the bloc are still under way.

Earlier this week, 14 independents announced the establishment of another centrist coalition in the newly-elected 13th Parliament, the National Bloc.

Another three blocs, two of them centrist and one

grouping opposition deputies, are also in the making.

Some deputies, however, do not seem ready to join a bloc before the first four-month ordinary session of Parliament is convened.

"We are not in a hurry to finalise a bloc. Many colleagues are new and we are still getting to know each other," said Khalil Haddadin, one of the architects of the projected opposition bloc.

According to Mr. Haddadin, who is also Secretary General of the Jordanian Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, "more than a dozen deputies" are participating in the discussions for such a bloc.

Among them, Mr. Haddadin named the only two Muslim Brotherhood members who ran in the Nov. 4 elections, Abdullah Akaileh (Tafilah) and Mohammad Azaydeh (Madaba), both of whom were expelled for defying the movement's boycott

directive.

Other deputies likely to join the projected bloc are: Jordanian Unionist Democratic Party's Bassam Haddadin (Zarqa), Ba'athist Nasheda'at Hamarneh (Madaba), and leftists Mohammad Bataineh (Irbid) and Mohammad Adhayleh (Karak).

Mr. Haddadin said there are two candidates for speaker of the Lower House among these deputies: Khaled Tarawneh (Karak), former senator and director of the Civil Defence Department, and Dr. Akaileh.

However, "we have not yet reached a final agreement on either forming a bloc or on choosing one candidate for the speakership," Mr. Haddadin told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Tarawneh, as the oldest deputy in the 13th Parliament, will be chairing the first session, before the election of the new speaker, according to parliamentary regulations.

Meanwhile, former Lower House Speaker Sa'ed Hayel Srou, another candidate for the speakership, said a third centrist bloc, under his leadership, could be announced as early as today.

A fourth centrist bloc is being negotiated under the leadership of Ali Abul Ragheb (Amman 3rd District), a former minister of industry and trade.

Mr. Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times that his bloc should be finalised "in a matter of days," but declined to provide other details.

Though the new Parliament seems set to be divided in the same number of blocs as the previous legislature, observers and deputies have noted that four of the five possible blocs would not differ much from each other and thus anticipate little parliamentary debate over key issues, such as economic reforms and normalisation of ties with Israel.

Jordanian-Bahraini higher committee to meet this month

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian-Bahraini Joint Higher Committee is scheduled to convene in Amman near the end of this month under the co-chairmanship of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Bahraini prime minister.

A source at the Ministry of Industry and Trade said the two sides will sign five agreements dealing with encouraging and protecting investments, preventing dual taxation, and cooperating in the fields of customs and land transport, and will conclude an executive programme on cultural and scientific cooperation through 1999.

The agreements will also cover education, higher education, culture, sports, youth, tourism, and information, according to the source.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade held a preparatory meeting to discuss the topics on the higher committee's agenda.

The source noted that the two countries maintain trade exchanges in implementation of trade agreements that exempt a long list of commodities from customs duties.

Jordanian exports to Bahrain amounted to JD14 million in 1996, while Jordanian imports totalled JD20 million. In the first seven months of this year, Jordan exported JD6.3 million worth of products to Bahrain and imported JD5.8 million worth of Bahraini goods, the source stated.

According to Samir Omeish, acting secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the higher committee will discuss the organisation of a Jordanian trade fair in Bahrain next year to promote the sale of national products and hold investment-promotion seminars.

He said the two sides will discuss a protocol on health cooperation that will allow Bahraini patients to obtain medical treatment in Jordan and will provide for Jordan to send doctors and specialists to Bahrain to work in medical and nursing institutions.

Dr. Omeish said the committee will discuss cooperation in technical fields, especially in oil and gas-related domains, and Jordan will invite Bahraini businesses to invest in Jordan's mining industry.

The two sides plan to discuss prospects for collaboration between their respective financial markets, he added.

Jordanian firm concludes \$25 million deal with Qatari company at Doha

DOHA (Petra) — Two major Jordanian and Qatari investment companies Tuesday concluded a \$25 million partnership and industrial investment agreement.

Under the agreement, the Jordanian Al Asr Investment Group Company and the Qatari Diarco International Trade Company will establish small and medium-size industries in both countries.

The agreement was signed by Al Asr Director General Ziad Salah and Diarco Director General Ibrahim Ne'meh.

In a statement following the signing of the agreement, Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani, who attended the signing ceremony, said "we want the private sector to thrive."

Governments have to provide the necessary facilities, while the private sector has to play its full role.

"If our performance in terms of providing the necessary investment climate and creating incentives for investment and participation strengthens the two countries' relations, not only at the official level but also at the private sector level, then I can conclude that this is

one of the reasons for the major successes of the Doha Economic Forum," he said.

Al Asr Investment Group is one of the leading Jordanian companies, with ten industrial plants producing electronics, textiles, foodstuffs, and plastics.

Also attending the signing ceremony was Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Hani Mulki.

Cabinet designates delegate to take part in Dubai trade conference

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Tuesday designated Mohammad Dalabih from the Jordan Ports Corporation to take part in a conference entitled "Sea Ports and Free Zones," which is to be held in Dubai on Nov. 23.

The Cabinet endorsed

agreements on land transport with Mauritania, air transport with Austria, and postal transfers with Morocco.

The Cabinet also approved an agreement on encouraging and protecting investments between Jordan and Poland and formed

a delegation, headed by Jordanian Ambassador to Canada Samir Khalifeh, to attend an Ottawa meeting next month on banning the use of anti-personnel mines.

A delegation was formed to take part in a steering committee meeting to be held in Cairo next month

that will work out an emergency plan to combat oil spills.

Another delegation was formed to take part in a regional conference on supervising Palestinian affairs, which will open at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Dec. 21.

Higher court puts off implementation of PPD decision to replace editor

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Higher Court of Justice yesterday delayed the implementation of an executive order by the head of the Press and Publications Department (PPD) to replace Taher Adwan, the editor of Al Arab Al Yawm, pending the outcome of a trial to hear his case.

Al Arab Al Yawm had petitioned the court to annul the PPD's decision, which cited Article 13 of the Press and Publications Law as the basis for requesting Mr. Adwan's replacement.

Article 13, as amended by the government in May, requires editors-in-chief to have at least ten uninterrupted years of experience

in journalism.

In its petition, Al Arab Al Yawm argued that Mr. Adwan's credentials were approved by the government even after the amendments were introduced, and as such, the PPD's decision contradicted that taken in June under the same circumstances. Mr. Adwan's case was defended by the company's lawyer Hanna Niddeh.

Another requirement of the law, which required weekly papers to raise their capital to JD300,000 by Aug. 15, resulted in the suspension of 13 weeklies.

Only one, Al Majd, managed to raise its capital before the deadline for the revocation of their licences

on Nov. 15.

The rest are still petitioning the Higher Court to reverse the suspension decision on the grounds that either the temporary law was unconstitutional or that the newspapers did in fact comply with its provisions concerning the capital.

The president of the court, Judge Farouq Kilani, has set Sunday as the date to hand down his decision on the matter.

It was not immediately known whether a date has been set for hearing a lawsuit that Al Arab Al Yawm has filed against the department following its decision to request Mr. Adwan's replacement.

News In Brief

Princess Wijdan opens cultural exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — Princess Wijdan Ali Tuesday attended a special celebration organised by the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Jordan to celebrate His Majesty King Hussein's 62nd birthday. Princess Wijdan opened a cultural exhibition organised by the archaeology department, including pictures of Her Majesty Queen Noor and reliefs depicting international archaeological sites and holy places, as well as pictures of archaeological sites in Jordan and the Arab World.

Accidents cause 1 death, 26 injuries

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) dealt with 127 accidents Monday, resulting in one death and 26 injuries, a CDD source said Tuesday.

Ministry to double U.N. compensation recipients

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministry of Labour Secretary General Saleh Tarawneh Tuesday said the ministry will double the number of compensation recipients from the U.N. Compensation Committee as of next week. He

added that the ministry will double the number of employees working in the compensation payment centres. Mr. Tarawneh called on beneficiaries to observe the dates announced by the Ministry to avoid congestion at the payment centre.

Cabinet endorses appointment of new ARA president

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet Tuesday endorsed the appointment of Marwan Duda as president of the Aqaba Region Authority (ARA), succeeding Fayez Khassawneh, who recently resigned.

Health officials to discuss findings of Vitamin A survey

AMMAN (Petra) — Senior Ministry of Health officials start a one-day workshop here today to discuss the findings of two national surveys on Vitamin A deficiency and acute respiratory infections. At the end of the workshop, the health officials are expected to develop a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations made by the surveys. The surveys were conducted by the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) earlier this year.

Minister stresses environmental protection

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Tawfiq Kreishan Tuesday stressed the importance of protecting the environment, saying the environment's protection is a national, regional, and international responsibility.

Addressing graduates of a week-long training course on the environmental situation, carried out as part of His Majesty King Hussein's project on training in environmental management, Mr. Kreishan stated that Jordan has started organising courses on environmental impact, utilising Canadian expertise.

The courses are aimed at developing human resources and training capacities to meet the country's need for experts in environmental management.

A total of eight trainers from the Environment Cor-

poration, the Royal Scientific Society, Jordan University for Science and Technology, and the Jordan Environment Society previously received a one-month training course in Canada.

Taking part in the training course were representatives from government institutions, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations.

The three-year environmental management project is being carried out by the Jordan Environment Corporation in cooperation with the Canadian International University Services. This \$1.4 million project is being financed by the Canadian International Development Agency.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Molloy.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

- * Children's film "Rosie and Jim" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

FIFTH JORDANIAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

- * Play entitled "The Wedding Night of Electra" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

CONCERT

- * Children's musical performance "Music to Look At and Objects to Listen To" by Dutch artist Marien Groenewald at 6:00 p.m. (For details on venue call the Netherlands Embassy Tel. 5930525).

EXHIBITIONS

- * Paintings by Saadi Al Kaabi at Orient Gallery (Tel. 6813034), until Dec. 4.
- * Exhibitions of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Mas'oudi (followed by signing ceremony of the book "A Nation in Exile") at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m. (until Dec. 31).
- * "Portrait '97" — works by over thirty Arab artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheima, until Nov. 30.
- * Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.
- * Exhibition of wallhangings and weavings by Bashar Kathem and others at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699131/2) until Dec. 4.
- * Paintings by Bahija Al Hakim at Hamaurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Nov. 22.
- * "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.
- * Paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31.
- * Works by Syrian artist Khaled Al Maz at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Nov. 22.
- * Bani Hamida fall exhibition "Encounter" (displaying rugs designed by Japanese textile designer Tomoko Iyoda) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 25 (Tel. 6586967).
- * Exhibition of wicker accessories from Wadi Rayan, handicrafts and gift items at the Jordan Rivers Design showroom (Tel. 613081), until Nov. 23.
- * Paintings by Patrice Cadennec at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 20.

SEMINAR

South African Tourism and Trade Seminar to be held on November 26, 1997 at the Regency Palace Hotel from 16:00 - 19:00.

For more information please phone the Embassy: 811194

Albright voices concern over nuclear threat in South Asia

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Tuesday expressed concern over nuclear proliferation in South Asia, saying Washington attached "high priority" to the issue.

She told a news conference she had stressed to the Pakistani government the importance of the U.S. places on limiting the spread of nuclear weapons technology and its transfer, and would also make it "quite clear" in her next stop India.

Ms. Albright, speaking after meeting President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, said proliferation was one reason for the current confrontation with Iraq.

It is the "responsibility of all responsible countries" to curtail the spread of nuclear weapons technology, she emphasised.

Both India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since independence in

1947, are believed to be capable of assembling atomic weapons at short notice. They have not signed the United Nations-sponsored Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Ms. Albright, who goes to India Tuesday after having dropped Bangladesh from her itinerary, said the United States wanted to develop "across the board" relations with India and Pakistan.

The U.S. attaches importance to developing economic, commercial, trade and other ties with the two countries on the basis of commitments to democracy, human rights and open markets, she said.

Ms. Albright and her Pakistani counterpart signed four agreements on enhancing cooperation, including \$20 million for soybeans imports and social welfare projects.

On the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, Ms. Albright reiterated U.S. policy of encouraging bilateral dialogue and giving

any help that might be asked for in easing tensions.

She said the U.S. administration was working "very hard" to solve a dispute over an aborted 1989 deal with Pakistan for 28 F-17 fighter aircraft, for which Islamabad had paid more than \$650 million.

The deal was scuttled over U.S. suspicions that Pakistan was developing nuclear weapons. Ms. Albright said U.S. efforts to sell the planes to a third country to refund Pakistan had not materialised so far.

Ms. Albright said she had discussed the Nov. 12 killing of four American oil executives in Karachi and said Pakistan and the U.S. would work together to combat terrorism.

She conveyed a "message of friendship" from U.S. President Bill Clinton who is to visit the region in the first quarter of 1998 and said she envisaged a "new 21st century relationship" with Pakistan.

Ms. Albright called for a

negotiated settlement to the factional strife in Afghanistan and strongly criticised the Taliban's "despicable" treatment of women and children and their general approach to human rights.

Another reason the U.S. has not recognised the Taliban administration is they do not occupy the entire country, she said.

Ms. Albright was to visit a camp for Afghan refugees and a school for girls in northwest Pakistan later Tuesday before travelling to India.

The Pakistani foreign minister, who attended the news conference, said Islamabad wanted a peaceful solution to the Kashmir dispute. It believed the U.S. could play a role in making the Indo-Pakistan dialogue "meaningful and productive."

"Pakistan desires undisturbed security and stability in its region," he said. "We hope Washington will bend its full efforts for the realisation of this goal."



Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright after meeting at his official residence in Islamabad (AFP photo)

Ranariddh forces torch Cambodian village, kill three civilians

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Forces loyal to ousted Cambodian First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh burned down houses and killed three civilians in a brutal raid on a remote village controlled by rival Phnom Penh troops, foreign military sources said Tuesday.

The fighters, now in an alliance with the Khmer Rouge guerrilla movement against strongman Hun Sen's Phnom Penh forces, carried out the raid on O Bei Chan late Friday in an apparent bid to scare residents of enemy-held territory, the sources added.

"The civilians were targeted," one said. "Put it this way, they weren't hit by crossfire, they wouldn't be wandering around outside in the middle of the night."

Thirty to 40 troops serving with the Cambodian army's 12th Division, which has remained loyal to Prince Ranariddh since his July ouster, took part in the raid under the command of General Lay Virak, another source said. They set houses on fire before killing the civilians — one woman and two men — and fleeing back into the jungle of northwestern Banteay Meanchey province, near the Thai border, he added.

Several hundred civilians

fled after the raid, some into neighbouring Thailand, but all were believed to have since returned, the sources said.

Prince Ranariddh's forces Sunday claimed they had seized control of the village and a military base there, killing three Hun Sen troops and capturing two and seizing a cache of weapons. Prince Ranariddh's soldiers were "warmly welcomed" by the villagers, they claimed. However, the sources said the claim in a statement issued from Bangkok, where Prince Ranariddh and many of his supporters have gathered since his ouster by Hun Sen in two days of bloody fighting here in July, was completely false. "It is absolutely not correct," one said, adding the military presence in the village of several hundred people consisted only of "a few wooden buildings with a flag on top."

Prince Ranariddh's troops have maintained resistance to Hun Sen's forces for the last four months around a narrow strip in the northwest of the country, bordering Thailand.

Their ranks include Khmer Rouge defectors, and the remaining core of the infamous rebel movement — which is charged with the deaths of up to two million

Cambodians during its genocidal reign over the country from 1975 to 1979 — is fighting by their side against its arch enemy Hun Sen.

Human rights officials expressed shock at news of the attack, with one saying it was the first time he had heard of such abuses committed by Prince Ranariddh's troops.

"This is very worrying if they are doing these things," added the senior official with a non-governmental organisation here, who declined to be named.

However, the military sources said Prince Ranariddh's forces had been using such tactics for some time, frustrated by their military failures which saw them rapidly pushed back to the Thai border after Second Prime Minister Hun Sen ousted the prince in two days of heavy fighting here in July.

"They've not only got former Khmer Rouge with them, they've got the real thing helping them on orders from Th Mok," one observer added, referring to a notorious one-legged commander now widely believed to be the most powerful figure in the rebel movement.

"So what do you expect?"

Cat breeding is next buzzword in Japan for virtual pets

TOKYO (AFP) — Following a rival company's Mega-hit electronic toy Tamagotchi, Japanese toy maker Takara Co. Ltd. is to launch virtual cats that allow their masters to breed future generations, officials said Tuesday.

The toy, named "Neko Unjatta" (I produced a cat), is to be put on sale on Dec. 19 and is to be exported to the United States and some other countries early next year, possibly as "My Kitty."

The "Neko Unjatta" can bear kittens if you use the "love-love communication function" by connecting two games that are supposed to be male and female cats.

The long-awaited kitten grows one year older a day, becoming mature for breeding purposes in a week.

"You have to be careful, because you cannot communicate two males together or two females together," Takara said in a statement.

A Takara marketing official said: "Virtual pets have established one genre in the toy industry, and we are trying to add more value to conventional stand-alone games."

Takara targets sales of 300,000 devices by next March, with each priced at 1,980 yen (\$16), exactly the same price tag as Tamagotchi pets manufactured by the

nation's biggest toy maker Bandai Co. Ltd.

Bandai is also to chase the breeding function for its egg-shaped Tamagotchi toy.

"We aim to start marketing such a new type by the end of the year," a spokeswoman said.

Tamagotchi behaves like a real pet, requiring food, baths and lavish attention to avoid death.

Bandai sold 13 million Tamagotchis in the 10 months to the end of September. Sales of the toy and related products such as diaries for Tamagotchis mothers totalled 24.9 billion yen in the six months to September.

bandai's biggest toy maker

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U.N. inquiry commission operational soon, radio

KINSHASA (AFP) — A U.N. team seeking to probe the alleged massacre of Rwandan Hutus in the former Zaire will soon begin its work, Democratic Republic of Congo official radio reported Tuesday.

"The mission will soon be up and running ... and should carry out its work impartially and objectively," the radio station said. It gave no specific date.

However, the radio also made no mention of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's warning Monday to President Laurent Kabila following the postponement of a meeting between his government and the U.N. investigators.

Mr. Annan said the U.N. would "take up appropriate actions" if Kinshasa refused to cooperate.

Earlier, U.N. spokesman Jose Diaz said a meeting planned for Monday with a liaison committee, set up by Mr. Kabila, had been put off until a later date.

The long-awaited meeting sought with the committee, led by Reconstruction Minister Etienne Richard Mbaya, was seen as a necessary prelude in cooperation by the Kinshasa government before the mission starts its inquiry into massacres of refugees.

The killings were allegedly carried out by Mr. Kabila's troops as they ousted former dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, bringing Mr. Kabila to power in May.

Tuesday's radio report said the investigators would say "who killed the refugees and when."

S. Africa's 'great crocodile' to marry again at 81

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Former South African President P.W. Botha, known as the great crocodile for his hard line on black liberation, plans to marry a woman 35 years his junior.

Mr. Botha, 81, was ousted from power in 1989 after he suffered a stroke. His wife of 54 years, Elize, died in June.

"Mr. P.W. Botha and Mrs. Reineke Te Water-Naudé hereby announce their engagement. No date has yet been set for the marriage," Mr. Botha's family said in a statement Tuesday.

Mrs. Te Water-Naudé runs a guesthouse. Her husband died of cancer seven years ago.

The new romance was first reported by the

News is scarce as French journalists strike

PARIS (AFP) — French journalists went on strike Tuesday to protest against a government plan to suppress a 30 per cent tax break on their pay which they say will particularly penalise the lowest earners.

The strike hit state-owned media hardest with no news at all on the continuous news radio station France Info.

There was no news either on the domestic wires of Agence France-Presse and coverage of French news by AFP's international wires was expected to be limited. But Associated Press and Reuters news agencies were functioning in French.

A journalist unions delegation was due to meet with Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who said he opposed ending the tax break, to protest the effective pay cut while journalists demonstrated outside his official residence.

The mass circulation Parisien Libéré, the Communist daily Humanité and the sports daily Equipe were on strike Tuesday, but the dailies Liberation and Figaro were expected to publish virtually normally Wednesday along with the evening paper Le Monde Tuesday.

The effects of the strike were variable in the provinces with some journalists threatening to refuse coverage to deputies and senators who voted in favour of the measure.

Last year, the former conservative government of Premier Alain Juppe backed down on a similar move, but it was revived this year by the new left-wing administration when the National Assembly, voting on a Socialist amendment, unanimously approved the gradual suppression over four years of tax breaks for 72 professions during a debate on the 1998 budget.

The parliament also voted a 100 million franc (\$20 million) compensation fund for the worst-hit journalists, but the unions say the fund is "unmanageable and discriminatory."

The tax break was introduced after World War II as a disguised subsidy for the press, laid low by the war.

The Upper House, the Senate, is due to debate the 1988 budget from Nov. 20 when Gaullist deputy Adrien Gouteyron will propose an amendment delaying the measure for a year.

Monday, Budget Secretary of State Christian Sautter said the government was determined to respect the result of the National Assembly vote ending the tax break "but without penalising modest or average incomes."

Hong Kong protesters urge China to free Wang Dan

HONG KONG (R) — A group of Hong Kong activists marched to the gates of Beijing's official mission here Tuesday and demanded the release of Chinese dissident Wang Dan.

The small but noisy protest came just two days after Beijing freed activist Wei Jingsheng on medical parole, an event which has been trumpeted in the Hong Kong media as a humanitarian move by China following last month's Sino-American summit meeting.

A dozen activists from the radical April Fifth action group mounted a boisterous protest outside China's Foreign Ministry Commission building on Hong Kong Island.

"The expression of one's political view is no crime. It is the Chinese government that is guilty. It oppresses its own people," said group leader Leung Kwok-Hung.

The group called on China to reverse its verdict on the June 4, 1989, crackdown against the student-led democracy movement in Beijing's Tiananmen

Square, which China has branded a counter-revolutionary rebellion. Many were killed in the crackdown.

"We demand the vindication of the June 4 movement, and those to blame for the massacre should be held responsible," Mr. Leung said, urging the release of all dissidents.

Mr. Wei, 47, regarded as the father of the modern democracy movement in China for his role in the earlier 1979 "democracy wall" campaign, was set free Sunday and flew to the United States where he is now undergoing medical treatment.

The former electrician spent almost 18 years in jail accused of leaking state secrets and plotting to overthrow the state.

Wang Dan, 28, was a student protest leader in 1989. He was convicted in 1996 of plotting to overthrow the government. With Mr. Wei now free, Mr. Wang is China's most prominent dissident in jail.

The demonstrators left a placard with Mr. Wang's

photograph and a petition letter on the gate of the foreign ministry office as officials from the mission refused to accept them.

A Hong Kong umbrella group supporting China's dissidents, the Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, announced Tuesday it will launch a "Christmas card signature campaign" this Saturday to press for Mr. Wang's freedom.

The petition signing will continue until Dec. 21.

Hong Kong's China-appointed leader Tung Chee-hwa said Monday night China's decision to release Mr. Wei was based on "humanitarian grounds".

Mr. Tung avoided commenting in detail, but he told reporters he wished the Chinese dissident a speedy recovery. Mr. Wei is said to be suffering from hypertension and liver ailments.

Hong Kong, a British colony for 156 years, reverted to Beijing's sovereignty on July 1 and is now a special capitalist region of China with wide ranging autonomy.

Taleban order traffic, business to halt in Kabul at prayer times

KABUL (AFP) — The Taleban administration has ordered security forces in Kabul to shut down businesses and stop traffic by closing main intersections, for Islamic prayers twice a day, official sources said Tuesday.

The Islamic militia's religious police have also been authorised to herd people into mosques to ensure maximum gathering during the mid-day and late afternoon prayers, they said.

The order, broadcast over the Taleban mouthpiece Radio Shariat, comes into force from Tuesday, the sources said.

"All security officials are hereby directed to close the city markets, suspend transactions and barricade roads to stop vehicular traffic so that all Muslims can say their prayers jointly in the nearest mosques," the broadcast said.

The announcement issued by the department meant for Fostering Virtue and Preventing Vice came two days after it asked Muslim residents in Kabul to rush to the mosques after hearing the calls for prayers five times a day.

Violators will be punished by the religious police teams, it said, but did not specify the penalty.

The department has been punishing "sinners" such as men who trim their beards and women who venture out without covering themselves from head to toe.

The police have armed mobile squads which monitor the observance of religious principles by the citizens of the once liberal Afghan capital.

Residents say the Taleban are coming down heavily on Kabul because they believe it has been contaminated during the 15 years of Communist rule which ended after the pull out of former Soviet forces in 1989.

The fundamentalist Taleban, who seized Kabul in September 1996, control around two-thirds of the war-ravaged country where they have enforced a strict interpretation of Islamic law.

Police question jailed E. Timor leader about bomb plot

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesian police Tuesday questioned jailed East Timorese rebel leader Xanana Gusmao in connection with a bomb plot, a lawyer said.

"According to the police his status is as a witness but I don't think he will be turned into a suspect," lawyer Luhut Pangaribuan from the Indonesian Legal Aid and Human Rights Association said after accompanying Mr. Gusmao during questioning at Jakarta's Cipinang jail.

The association's executive director said earlier Tuesday that Mr. Gusmao was questioned in relation with the discovery in September of a bomb-making operation in Demak, Central Java, involving East Timorese youths.

The military says a group of activists had assembled bombs to disturb security in East Timor and in Indonesia.

One of the homemade bombs exploded, but no one was injured. The explosion, believed to be accidental, led to the capture of seven youths there and another two at Dili harbour in East Timor.

Their questioning led the military to believe Mr. Gusmao, 50, may have been involved as his name had appeared on one of the documents found on the group.

"As long as it is for the struggle (of East Timor) I support it," another lawyer present at the questioning of

Mr. Gusmao quoted him as saying.

During the first three-hour session, police questioned Mr. Gusmao on several people, including exiled East Timorese pro-independence activist and Nobel laureate Jose Ramos Horta, Mr. Pangaribuan said during a 30-minute break.

"Some of them he knew, including Horta, but others he did not," Mr. Pangaribuan said.

He said the questioning proceeded "well and informally," and added Mr. Gusmao even served bread he had baked the previous evening.

Authorities are also seeking the return of two East Timorese holed up at the Austrian embassy since Sept. 19 for their suspected role in the bomb-making ring.

The two, Nuno Vincente Pereira and Avelino Mario Coelho da Silva alias Shalar Kossi, entered the embassy with four other people in an attempt to gain asylum in Portugal which has no diplomatic ties with Indonesia.

Portugal severed diplomatic ties shortly after Indonesian troops invaded its former colony of East Timor in December 1975.

Jakarta unilaterally declared East Timor its youngest province the following year but the United Nations and most states still

view Mr. Lisbon as the official administrator over the territory.

Officials will not allow Mr. Pereira and Mr. da Silva to leave the country and have asked Austria to hand them over. The other four at the Austrian mission will be free to leave the country, Jakarta has said.

Mr. Gusmao, who led the Fretilin separatist movement from 1979 until his arrest in Dili, the East Timor capital, in November 1992, is serving a 20-year sentence.

He was jailed for life in May 1994 for plotting against the state and for illegal possession of firearms. Mr. Suharto later commuted the sentence to a 20-year term.

The questioning took place on the day President Suharto left for visits to Namibia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Canada.

South African officials have said President Nelson Mandela would renew his appeal for the release of Mr. Gusmao during Mr. Suharto's visit Nov. 20 to 22 that will include the signing of agreements in trade and aviation.

Mr. Mandela's first call for the release of Mr. Gusmao was made during his state visit here in July. He had said the move was necessary to "normalise the situation in East Timor."

News is scarce as French journalists strike

PARIS (AFP) — French journalists went on strike Tuesday to protest against a government plan to press a 30 per cent pay rise on their pay. The strike in the capital will paralyse the French media.

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North, South Korea agree to pursue ferry link plan

BEIJING (AFP) — North and South Korea have held breakthrough talks on a direct car and passenger ferry service linking the two and have reached consensus that the project should go ahead, U.N. officials said Tuesday.

"The issue of the ferry service was raised yesterday and the unanimous decision by countries concerned was that this project should go ahead," said Nay Htin, U.N. Assistant Secretary General.

He was speaking at the end of the annual meeting of the U.N. Development Programme Tumen River Area Development Programme that coordinates a tripartite economic zone where China, North Korea and Russia meet.

The group's members include both North and South Korea.

The ferry service — which will link Sokcho in South Korea to Rajin in North Korea and then link up by road with Hunchun in northern China — has been stuck on the drawing board for half a decade, mainly because of disputes between North and South Korea.

South Korea's two main objections to the scheme were that it did not directly involve Pyongyang but the Committee for the Promotion of External Economic Cooperation, and that the safety of South Koreans could not be guaranteed.

Political difficulties between the two Koreas — which are still technically at war — have further complicated the issue, with Seoul being reticent to approve such a scheme without a general improvement in ties.

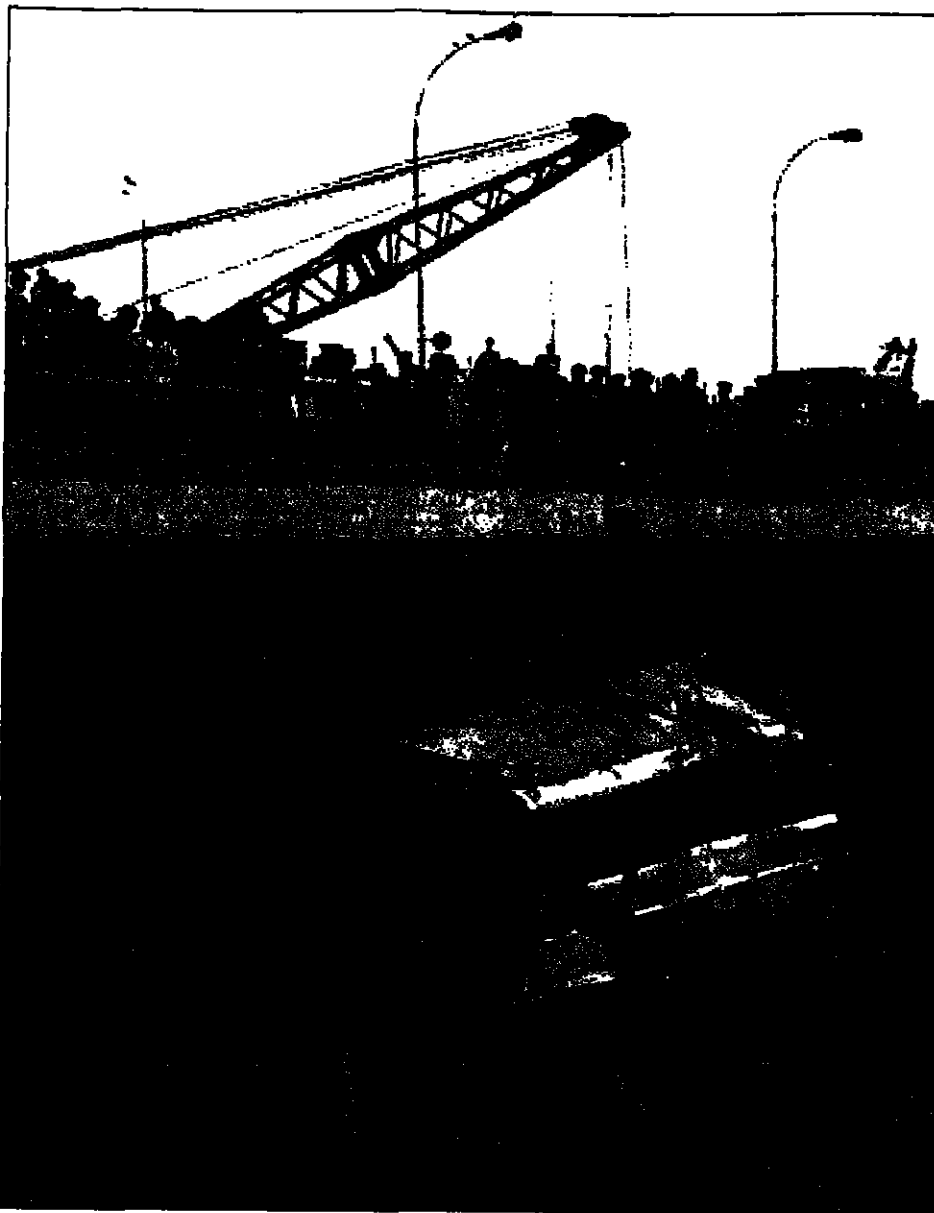
"The initial discussions were an historic first and were important and constructive," said U.N. representative to China Arthur Holcombe.

He said further discussions would be required at regional, governmental, technical and commercial levels, but predicted significant progress once South Korea's presidential elections have been completed in December.

"We sense that for a variety of reasons, a number of issues are stalled in the run up to the South Korean presidential elections as the government is quite clearly distracted," Mr. Holcombe said.

"We are hopeful that after the elections the air will be cleared and this will lead to movement on projects like this," he added.

North Korea created the Rajin-Sonbong free economic and trade zone in 1991 and is expected to have absorbed \$100 million in foreign investment by the end of the year.



The wreckage of a school bus is pulled out of a river in New Delhi (Renter photo)

26 Indian children die in schoolbus disaster

NEW DELHI (AFP) — At least 26 Indian school children died Tuesday and more than 50 were injured when an overloaded bus plunged off a bridge into New Delhi's main river, police officials said.

Police warned the death toll could rise after the accident in the north of the capital. Later there were angry scenes outside a hospital after some survivors had to be turned away amid chaotic scenes.

The vehicle, reportedly designed to carry 55 children but packed with around 120, crashed off New Delhi's Wazirabad bridge at 7:35 a.m. (0205 GMT) into the Yamuna River.

Police official C. Vohra, who confirmed the casualties, said 58 children, aged between six and 17, had been injured.

"The bus breached the railing and fell into the river," he said.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral said he felt "deep grief and shock" following the tragedy.

The government immediately ordered an inquiry into the accident.

Witnesses said local fishermen had launched the rescue. "When the police came they did nothing ... they said they did not know how to swim. The children were screaming," one witness said.

About 10 children managed to swim to safety through a bus window. Navy divers were brought in to help the rescue operation.

The United News of India (UNI) said the vehicle had fallen into around 10 metres of water.

It said 93 school bags had been recovered and quoted fire brigade officials as saying the vehicle skidded on a patch of sand. The bus was lifted from the river bed two hours after the accident.

Most of the victims and survivors, many with head injuries, were taken to Hindu Rao Hospital in the north west of the capital. The building was thronged with hundreds of wailing relatives.

Angry scenes developed after hospital volunteers said two children had been wrongly declared dead. Officials denied the incident.

There were new protests when a badly injured boy, carried into the hospital by fellow students, could not get into the hospital because of the chaos.

Munni Devi, a mother whose 12-year daughter Manju was killed, cried: "I do not want to live. I will go with her."

M.C. Arora, a clerk from the school, said: "There were 120 children in the bus. Its seating capacity was 55."

Delhi Chief Minister Sahib Singh Verma said the school head had been suspended.

"We will not allow whoever is responsible for this tragedy to go free. The people who allowed the bus to be packed with more than 100 children will be punished," he said.

Cholera death toll rises to 120 in Mozambique

MAPUTO (AFP) — The death toll from a cholera outbreak has risen to 120 in the capital of Mozambique and surrounding districts, health authorities said Tuesday.

The head of the Health Ministry's epidemiology department, Avertino Barreto, said 2,700 cases have been recorded in Maputo since the outbreak began two months ago.

Mr. Barreto expressed fear that the water-borne disease could spread quickly with the onset of the rainy season.

The disease has hit another Mozambican town, Xai-Xai, in southern Gaza province where 47 cases have been reported but so far no deaths.

Retired health workers and medical students are being mobilised to assist at the Maputo Central Hospital which is holding some 400 cholera patients.

Overcrowding which has seen some patients lying on the floor of hospital wards has prompted the Health Ministry to consider opening emergency wards in several suburbs of the capital.

Nigerian court sentences 21 people to death

LAGOS (AFP) — A Nigerian court has sentenced 21 people to death after finding them guilty of murdering a hospital director in a dispute over money, police said Tuesday.

The verdict and sentence were handed down over the weekend by the High Court in Zaria in northern Kaduna state, the police told AFP.

They 21 defendants were found guilty of killing the director of the Ahmadu Bello University Hospital Centre in Zaria, Bamidele Bandipo, the state police chief Yakubu Shu'abu said.

The defendants have 30 days to lodge an appeal.

Judge Stephen Makeri said enough evidence has been established against them to warrant their conviction for culpable homicide, which carries the death penalty.

Bandipo was murdered in October 1995 by irate hospital workers demanding unpaid allowances.

The court was told they went into Bandipo's office, beat him into a coma and dumped him inside the boot (trunk) of a car. He was later taken to a hospital mortuary where he was rescued by police, but died of his injuries.

Heavy fighting grips Sri Lanka, toll mounts

COLOMBO (AFP) — Fierce battles raged in northern Sri Lanka Tuesday as troops kept up a major offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas amid mounting casualties.

Thousands of soldiers were Tuesday pressing ahead with their biggest and bloodiest offensive against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Defence Ministry said.

The LTTE in a statement from its London office said 13 of its members were killed in two separate battles in the north where troops are trying to capture a key highway from the rebels.

"Fighting broke out when several thousands of Sinhalese troops attempted to advance with tanks under air and artillery cover," the LTTE statement said. It did not give details of military casualties.

Defence officials said the army had captured the strategic town of Puliyanakulam and troops had moved further north on another flank along the Mankulam-Mullaitivu road.

The road cuts across the main land route to the northern peninsula of Jaffna. A Defence Ministry statement said seven soldiers had been killed since Sunday but defence sources said that nine had died.

Puliyanakulam is situated on the 76-kilometre highway which the military has been battling to capture since it began its offensive on May 13.

Troops have moved beyond Puliyanakulam on the main highway, official sources said.

With the latest push the troops have covered about 30 kilometres of the highway but the military has also moved cross-country and said last month it had already regained two-thirds of its objective.

Last week the Defence Ministry said troops were bracing for the "final offensive" against the LTTE and were set to open the highway, which links the northern peninsula of Jaffna with the rest of the country.

Government forces captured Jaffna town, the former citadel of the LTTE, in December 1995. But the main land access to the region is still held by the Tigers, forcing the authorities to supply the peninsula by air and sea.

The battle for the highway has claimed the lives of more than 800 soldiers, according to official figures, making it the biggest and the bloodiest operation undertaken by Sri Lankan troops.

The military says it has killed more than 2,500 rebels in the past six months, a claim denied by the rebels.

Security forces have committed some 20,000 men to the operation.

Analysts see the opening of the highway as a crucial move that could confine the LTTE to the northeastern jungles and deprive them of access to the minority Tamil community.

Muslims and Hindus backed apartheid oppression, probe hears

EAST LONDON. South Africa (AFP) — Muslim and Hindu leaders Tuesday admitted their communities were guilty of helping enforce the white minority's oppressive separation of South Africa's racial groups under apartheid.

Clerics from the predominantly ethnic Indian and coloured (mixed-race) faiths were testifying before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is currently probing the role of churches in apartheid-era crimes.

Faried Esack, a cleric and former leader of South Africa's Call of Islam movement, accused many lighter-skinned Muslims of mistreating their poor, black cousins.

"Blacks often experienced suffering as workers in the homes of Muslims," Mr. Esack testified. "In our own personal lives, we were no different from those white people, whom we ... call the oppressors."

Muslims were never "singled out for oppression during apartheid," when the minority-white regime enforced discriminatory laws and services for each of the country's four main race groups.

"We didn't suffer as Muslims, but as coloureds and Indians, and a handful of blacks and whites," Mr. Esack said.

Ashwin Trikamjee, a representative of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha movement, described how Hindus lost churches and schools as a result of state actions.

Yet he conceded that "so-called leaders" of the country's one million-strong Indian community often cooperated with the regime, and in some cases served in a short-lived tricameral parliament divided along racial lines.

"In the past, so-called leaders of the Hindu community failed miserably and hopelessly in voicing opposition to the apartheid regime," Mr. Trikamjee said.

Others who opposed apartheid distanced themselves from the Hindu community, he added.

Mr. Esack described how apartheid police allowed mosques to remain while tearing down multi-religious, black and coloured neighbourhoods which the government had earmarked exclusively for white groups.

"Our mosques were left untouched ... the apartheid regime demolished churches, while Muslims were uprooted, thrown into the middle of nowhere... thrown far from our businesses," Mr. Esack said.

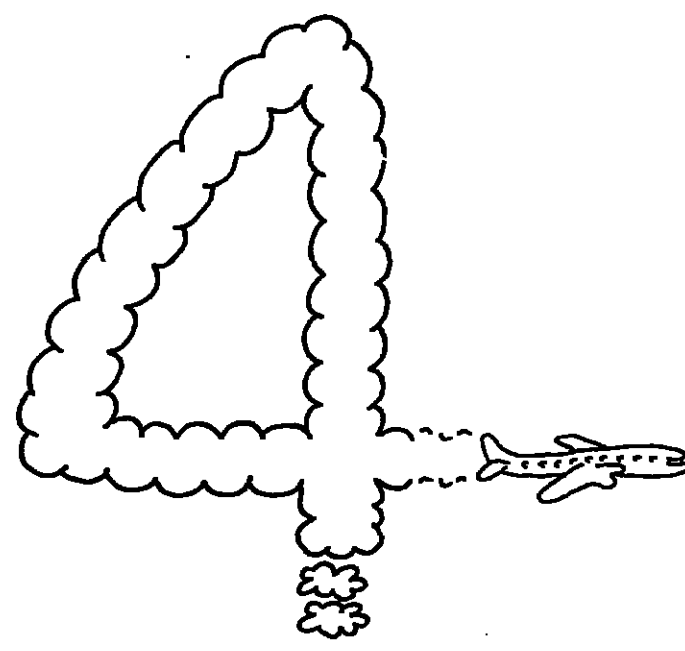
Islamic leaders maintained "a solid silence" after a Muslim anti-apartheid activist was killed in prison in 1979, the former Call of Islam leader said.

"That silence held for seven years non-stop, at a mosque level and a religious leadership level," Mr. Esack said.

Since Monday, the truth commission has been probing the role of a range of religious groups in either supporting or opposing the former government, which gave way to a black-led government under President Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress (ANC) in the historic 1994 all-race elections.

The Dutch Reformed Church, whose Afrikaner members included senior apartheid government leaders, is expected to offer an apology Wednesday for its support of an oppressive regime.

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Sri Lanka cinema screens film for women only

COLOMBO (AFP) — A Sri Lankan cinema is to screen a film based on India's ancient sex manual, the Kama Sutra, with a "women only" restriction instead of the usual "adults only" tag reserved for X-rated movies.

The Savoy cinema owner, Asanka Edirisirighe, said they decided on three shows from next Tuesday following appeals from women's groups, especially Muslim women, that they could not sit together with men and watch the film.

"We have Muslim women writing to us and asking for special women's-only shows because they were embarrassed to sit with men," Mr. Edirisirighe said.

"We have obtained permission from the (state) Film Corporation to make this exception in view of the big demand," Kama Sutra, directed by Mira Nair, is drawing big crowds at the Savoy and has been issued with a "strictly for adults" warning by the government's Public Performance Board, or the censors.

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Out with prejudices

IT IS customary to hear prejudiced people from one religious faith smear another out of sheer ignorance and intolerance. But for a religious authority, like U.S. Christian Evangelist Pat Robertson, to utter venomous statements against Islam is not only utterly irresponsible, it is also dangerous in that what he says can sow the seeds of deeper animosities among human beings. Robertson's recent reference to Muslims as slave traders who sold Africans into servitude is nothing but an arrogant attempt to distort history and perpetuate Islamophobia. Vicious attacks on Islam by people like him have done nothing to promote understanding and tolerance between the three monotheistic religions. On the contrary the attacks have led to such diverse and negative reactions as we can see violently displayed the world over today, the latest being the Luxor massacre.

Even if we assume, for the sake of arguing with Robertson's vindictive remark, that some Arabs were involved in the sale of slaves to Americans a few centuries ago, is it not so obvious to him, and to all like-minded people, that it was the white Christians of America who "bought" them and perpetuated their enslavement for a long time? If we are to dig deeper into history, we can find that the mistreatment of Africans and other races had assumed greater proportions at the hands of the white Christians of Europe and America than by any other people or faith. Islam, as is well-known to its followers and others, banned trading in slaves and not only freed them but also considered them equal citizens in the state.

It is conceivable that there were some Arabs who aided and abetted the slave trade for the American market for strictly material considerations and in defiance of the ideals and tenets of their religion.

But to put the tag of "slave traders" on today's Arabs and Muslims is like equating Americans, the descendants of European immigrants, to the barbarians of Europe in its dark age.

Most peoples on Earth have dark spots in their histories, not least among them the Americans themselves. If present-day conflicts were to be fought with name-calling and mudslinging no one nation will escape being stained. But if we all seek the bright future that has been promised by prophets and philosophers alike then remarks like those made by Rev. Robertson will only take us backward. If any, these remarks and similar counter-remarks will only lead to greater misunderstandings and indeed deeper conflicts.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai'i's Ramadan Rawashdeh urged the concerned authorities to build a hospital in the Shobak district of southern Jordan in view of the increasing demand for health services that are unavailable at clinics and health centres. One after another, the successive governments promised the Shobak district a hospital realising that it is an urgent requirement for the tens of thousands of local residents. Said the writer. He said patients are often referred to Ma'an hospital or to hospitals in Amman, facing difficulties in making the trip to another governorate either because they are poor and cannot afford travel expenses for repeated treatment at far away hospitals or because they are in such poor health and cannot risk taking the trips to these hospitals. The writer said visitors and tourists who need hospitalisation while on a trip in the Shobak district are air-lifted by helicopter to Amman, a costly trip for the country. He said even a 10-bed hospital that could be enlarged later is a pressing need for Shobak inhabitants and one that would save the country extra expenses and provide the local inhabitants with a most valuable service.

Al Dustour daily said day-after-day voices are raised around the world calling on the U.S. to resort to negotiation rather than confrontation in dealing with the Iraqi problem; and the Arab countries in particular are showing very negative reaction to the ongoing U.S. preparations for war on Iraq. The paper said among the loudest voices was perhaps that of HRH Crown Prince Hassan who said that the use of force is a blunt instrument and that the human dimension should be taken into account. Furthermore, said the paper, His Majesty King Hussein was among the first Arab visitors to call on President Bill Clinton and urge dialogue and quiet diplomacy instead of confrontation. Perhaps it is the first time since the 1991 Gulf war in which the U.S. finds itself alone except for Britain in rushing towards the military option and preparing to escalate the situation for an eventual strike on Iraq, said the paper. As the war preparations continue, the paper said, the Arab countries should rally together and take a unified stand against the use of force and advocate dialogue and even mediate to prevent another aggression on the Iraqi people.

Washington Watch

The Saddam phenomenon

DR. RON WALTERS, a professor of political science at the University of Maryland and a leading African-American intellectual, was once asked to explain the "Farrakhan phenomenon." Minister Louis Farrakhan is the current leader of the movement in the U.S. known as the Nation of Islam.

"Farrakhan," Walters responded, "can best be understood as the measure of the depth of Black alienation from White America." This alienation, Walters continued, was felt at every level of African-American society: the poor, the young and unemployed, and even those successful and well-established who have been scarred by discrimination. Since, in varying degrees, many have experienced this alienation, the appeal of Farrakhan is broader than his actual membership.

The minister's appeal is in his blatant and often times outrageous challenge to the dominant American culture. When he defies the authorities or when he denounces major institutions, he strikes a responsive chord. And because his appeal is based on deeply felt alienation, when he is attacked, his appeal becomes even stronger.

In this regard, the Farrakhan phenomenon is as much a psychological phenomenon of anger and alienation as it is a political phenomenon. What is clear to the majority of African-American leaders is that this phenomenon is not a solution to the dilemmas faced by their community. Farrakhan, and the support he receives, is a symptom of the problems facing Black America, not its cure.

I thought of this model in the past week as I watched the displays of pro-Saddam sentiment in Iraq, in Cairo, in Ramallah, and in Gaza. The point I am seeking to make became clearer as I engaged callers to my call-in radio and TV programmes on ANA-TV in the U.S.

What was being played out in the demonstrations and the phone calls was a measure of

the depth of Arab alienation from the existing world order. In almost every instance, there was anger. Anger at the U.S. "double standard," anger at the failure of the world community to enforce resolutions against Iraq but not against Israel, and anger at the plight of the Iraqi people.

There was, in all of this, no real support for the regime in Iraq, and no real effort to excuse its abuses or its terror. But, and "but" is an overused word in these discussions, in each instance those who are angry and alienated respond "but what about Cana" or "but what about Netanyahu and Sharon," etc.

There is a connection between the failing peace process, the obstructionism of the Likud government, and the mood of anger and alienation that has clouded and captured the minds of many.

Former Secretary of State James Baker understood this well. Speaking before Congress on September 4, 1990, at the early stages of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, he addressed this issue. In response to a congressman who asked why the U.S. should continue to consider Palestinian needs when there were pro-Saddam rallies in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Baker said:

"One of the most telling arguments that Saddam Hussein makes is that he is the champion of the down-trodden. He (pretends to be) the champion of the Palestinians who have no place to go and who are sorely put-upon, and that is why I think... it is important that we keep our eyes as well on the ball of moving... towards some resolution of that problem, because then the ground will not be as fertile as it is today."

The reason that the Doha summit has not succeeded in gaining broad Arab support, the reason that the majority of the U.S. Arab allies are not supporting a U.S. military response to Saddam's latest antics, and the reason that on

the "Arab street," as it is called, there is still "fertile ground" is one and the same. There is still, seven years after Baker spoke, a profound Arab sense of grievance with the West's failure to address legitimate Arab needs and aspirations.

What is most heartening is that major U.S. newspapers have written extensively about this very issue in the past week. And within the administration itself there is a growing debate. There is recognition that U.S. foreign policy objectives are confounded by our failure to address the root causes of Arab alienation and by our failure to equitably address Arab rights and needs.

Saddam's outrageous provocations and the supportive response they illicit are not a solution. What has Iraq gained? The Security Council is now unanimous in its resolve to tighten sanctions. The Iraqi people will continue to suffer. And those who demonstrate out of anger are sadly no closer to freedom.

Similarly, simply striking the dictator down is not a solution in and of itself since that could only cause the alienation to grow. The regime in Iraq must comply with U.N. resolutions. But, for the credibility of that institution, and the U.S. that stands behind it, there must be consistency.

As American society has learned, there is a warning bell that must be heard if the Farrakhan phenomenon is to be understood and resolved. The legacy of discrimination against African-Americans and its consequences must be addressed. So too, the world community and especially the U.S. must understand the sources of the phenomenon of alienation that are now being manifested in the Middle East.

If, in Baker's words, the root causes of Arab despair and anger are addressed and resolved, the ground will not be so fertile and Saddam will be playing to an unresponsive audience.

The Australian republic: Too late for hesitations

By Gwynne Dyer

"THE RISK," warned Tony Abbott, ex-director of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy, "is that we will destroy the legitimacy of the existing Constitution without producing an acceptable alternative, and end up like Canada, which has been left fractured by two decades of constitutional navel-gazing." But it's too late for hesitations: Australia is going to become a republic.

It isn't clear yet exactly what kind of republic, and there still has to be a referendum, but basically it is a done deal. In a series of statements over the past week, Australia's Prime Minister John Howard has made it clear that next February's constitutional convention will have the task of formulating a concrete proposal for a republic that will then be put to Australians in a referendum.

Many people had doubts about Howard's true intentions, for he opposed a republic when Labour leader Paul Keating floated the idea before the 1993 election. When Howard instead promised a constitutional convention before his Liberal-led coalition won the 1996 election, he was widely suspected of trying to bury the issue.

Suspensions deepened when Howard announced that he would pick half of the 152 convention delegates himself — but the people Howard has nominated are unanimously conceded to be a fair cross-section of Australian society and opinion. A postal ballot will elect the other half of the delegates by 9 December, and Howard has now given the convention a precise task and promised a referendum on the outcome. Why?

The world is full of people who would be surprised to learn that the

Queen of England (and Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and New Zealand, and even Canada) is also Queen of Australia. Indeed, it has always been a contentious issue in Australia itself, since so many of the country's early settlers were Irish and convicts — the two categories were not fully interchangeable — who loathed the British monarchy and all its works.

"[A]n Australian republic would deliver not one extra job, not one extra hospital bed, not one extra policeman on the beat, not one extra cent paid off the national debt."

Prime Minister John Howard

The issue stayed on a back burner for so long because it was too divisive to bring out into the open — and because it has been a long time now since the British monarch had any real say in Australia. As Howard puts it, Australia is a "crowned republic": its real head of state is the governor-general, appointed by the queen on the recommendation of the Australian government, and that person has always been an Australian since 1965.

The symbolism still grates on many Australians, however, and the approaching centenary of Australian federation on New Year's Day, 2001 has put the issue on the front burner. Image-conscious Australian republicans are especially anxious to avoid having the 'British Queen' open the 2000 Sydney Olympics. But it was the queen herself, or rather her dysfunctional family, that finally tipped the balance against the monarchy.

In September, right after Diana's death, opinion polls for the first time in Australian history showed a

clear majority of voters committed to a republic: 54 per cent for, 30 per cent against, and 16 per cent undecided. Diana died a monarchist, but she has proven to be the greatest force for republicanism in several generations.

Two months of feverish debate in Australia about the monarchy since her death has scarcely shifted the September numbers at all. If the

'undecideds' split in the same proportion, then the actual anti-monarchy majority, come the referendum, could be as great as two-to-one. And that is why John Howard is going with the flow.

As he himself said on 11 November, "an Australian republic would deliver not one extra job, not one extra hospital bed, not one extra policeman on the beat, not one extra cent paid off the national debt." It's hard to imagine a more purely symbolic issue. But Howard is in enough trouble with the electorate on other issues that he can see the benefits of a harmless diversion that uses up about a year's political time.

So Australia will be a republic before the millennium, and the question is whether other countries will follow. New Zealand's new prime minister, Jenny Shipley, says that she has no intention of bringing the issue up, but she may find it hard to resist once Australia's intentions become clear.

New Zealand has its Irish popula-

tion too, plus many non-British immigrants and over 15 per cent Maoris and Pacific Islanders — all people who have no particular reason to love the British Queen. And if New Zealand can do it, what about Canada, where over a quarter of the population speaks French and around 40 per cent are of neither British nor French origin?

It is a matter of permanent astonishment that Canada has not offered the olive branch of a republic to its non-British majority. It would cost nothing, it would save wounds left open by the endless constitutional wars, and no significant group would oppose it. Even younger-generation Canadians of British or part-British descent don't give a fig for the monarchy.

Walter Bagehot, who articulated the idea of a constitutional monarchy as 19th-century Britain gradually moved towards mass democracy, was a cynical man. A monarchy, he observed, concentrated the attention of the nation "on one person doing interesting things," whereas a republic was "a government in which the attention is divided between many, who are all doing uninteresting actions."

Bagehot therefore argued that democracy would work better if the monarchy "acts as a disguise" which the mob can cheer for, even if it means that "the real (elected) rulers are secreted in second-class carriages." But that was before mass media and mass education gave most people the ability to make their own political choices.

Bagehot was in the business of rationalising the status quo, and he was probably always wrong. He's certainly wrong now: even in Britain the monarchy will only survive if it greatly scales down its pretensions.

LETTERS

Entitled to more accuracy

To the Editor:

YOUR ARTICLE entitled "Reorganised national committee aims to increase women's role in society" (Jordan Times, Nov. 18, 1997) has several factual and contextual mistakes that need correction, beginning with (but regrettably not only limited to) the name of the committee! The official name of the body that your article deals with is the **Jordanian National Committee for Women (JNCW)** and not the **National Committee for Jordanian Women (NCJW)**, which I remember I distinctly informed your reporter of on the day he interviewed me in my capacity as secretary general (and not general secretary) of JNCW. The event that led to this unfortunate interview was that the Cabinet, upon the recommendation of Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal, Chairperson of JNCW, had approved a new membership of JNCW since the term of the membership of the previous committee expired on November 15. Your reporter quotes me as saying that "we have appointed a large number of members who are specialised in certain fields, such as law, and others who have experience in working for women-related issues and governmental or electoral fields," when the least I should know about the organisation I have the honour to work in is how its membership is formed! Actually, I am sure I did not say that whole sentence which appears as a quote from me.

Ever since its establishment, JNCW has had the function of coordination with both governmental and non-governmental organisations. Therefore, the statement that JNCW "has added a coordinating sub-committee with government organisations, in addition to the existing

NGO coordinating sub-committee" is wrong since this function has been going on for a long time.

The legal committee that works with JNCW is not composed solely of technocrats as it appears in your article, but has a wider scope of membership. Its recommendations are first reviewed by JNCW before they are submitted through official channels.

Several errors have occurred in your reporting on the new membership of JNCW. The membership includes the ministers (not representatives) of planning and social development (not development affairs), the rapporteur (not a representative) of the Senate Legal Committee, the under-secretary of labour (not works), and the under-secretary of higher education is not among the members of JNCW.

The titles (and sometimes names) of civil society representatives in JNCW are incorrect. The secretary general (not general secretary) of the General Federation of Labour Unions is Khaled Shreim (not Abdul Halim Khaddam). The chairperson (not director) of the General Federation of Jordanian Women is Nujoud Fawzi, (not Najwa Nouri). Amneh Zu'bi is chairperson (not director) of the Jordanian Women's Union, and May Abu Samen is secretary general (not director) of the Jordanian National Forum (not federation) of Women.

Surely, JNCW and the Jordan Times readership are entitled to more accurate reporting than this.

Amal A. Sabbagh
 Secretary General of JNCW

OCCURRED TO ME

Elevation but no elation

By Ali Kassab

ONE OF THE most fascinating aspects of life in the Middle East is the faith that some have in the cyclical theory of history. You see, people are displeased with the gap that separates one's self image from the reality of one's life. The obvious solution would be to do something about it, like identifying problems and solving them. But that means work, which is unacceptable in our exalted tribal traditions. Work is done by women and men of modest birth. Nobles earn their keep for refraining from doing what they are best qualified to do, which is to obstruct those willing to work.

Besides, our noble Arab politeness, unlike the brash ways of the infidels, prevents us from admitting that problems exist. It is more polite to deny them. Therefore, we have come up with the cyclical theory of history, which is supported by nothing other than our wishful thinking. Briefly put, it states that Arabs were powerful and affluent when Europeans were backward and poor, so it is only a matter of waiting until history goes a full cycle and restores to us our past glory without our having to lift a finger.

Whether the theory holds, only time will tell. However, its proponents can take heart from some manifestations of its validity that have begun to make themselves felt, on a small scale, of course, but as Confucius wisely observed, the journey of a thousand miles starts with one step, or words to this effect.

Now if you cast your minds back to a time which many of our young will be surprised to learn existed, mainly the pre-computer game age, you will remember the joy we had playing snakes and ladders; the rapture that accompanied hitting the bottom of a ladder, or the unsportsmanlike glee when an opponent landed on the head of a snake. Little did we know then that this game would haunt us and dominate our adult lives.

It all started when someone decided that lines in the middle of the road, which we seem to draw because we see advanced countries do so, then we proceed to ignore them completely, were inadequate as a decoration. Therefore they were replaced by protruding cats eyes, then bigger and more luminous cats eyes, and so on. Then some decorator figured out that it must be quite boring to have luminous lines running only the length of the highways and byways, so we started putting them across the streets in the most preposterous places, impeding the flow of traffic unnecessarily.

The trouble with life, however, is that people would not leave good enough, or bad enough in this case, alone. They have to take it a step further. So now the large cats eyes are being replaced by even larger bumps, which make driving in Amman an interesting experience, rather like the song that compares life to a roller-coaster. One minute you are flowing along, then the next you cease to drive and begin to fly after hitting a bump, only to land in a pot hole that has not been filled and levelled because all the workmen are too busy building bumps.

Unlike the roller-coaster or the game of snakes and ladders, however, this is a case when elevation and elation do not go together.

منا عنة الناصر

Features

Regent addresses MENA conference closing session

(Continued from page 1)

potentials can be employed in promoting their economy," said the Regent.

He said that "Arab citizens have been deprived for many years of the blessing of stability but the time has come for reason to be the driving force behind planning and ambitious concepts to act as an incentive for construction and faith to serve as a way for good and constructive work. We in Jordan are for peace and we believe that it is more difficult to attain than war because

peace is not just signing paper but rather diligence, perseverance and vision. The peace process is bound to encounter obstacles and meet with moments that cause despair and scepticism but only the faithful hold on and strive to arrive at the final objective."

He said "absence of peace means a return to the state of war, killing and assassination of life opportunities for the coming generation. War means that our region spends on preparations for conflict and the maintenance of weapons more than it allocates for agri-

culture, development and scientific research. Indeed, statistics on poverty and unemployment reveal the bitter reality which we should try to end."

Prince Hassan stressed that reform starts with oneself stressing that "we support all initiatives for cooperation among ourselves and opening channels of communication for humanitarian relations and for investment. We seek to rebuild our Arab institutions, carry out joint ventures, achieve integration, boost our production and enhance our competitive capabilities."

MENA participants call for peace progress

(Continued from page 1)

privatisation, structural reform, and the removal of trade barriers.

"This has provided a business-friendly economic climate throughout the region and will strengthen the ability to attract foreign investment and trade," stated the declaration.

Participants agreed that the Palestinian economy should be developed as it continues to suffer from Israeli-imposed restrictions and closures which hinder trade and the movement of labourers.

They said the "immediate removal of these restrictive measures and closures... is essential toward restoring confidence between the concerned parties."

Many Western business leaders went home with many "proposals in their bags" for potential joint ventures with MENA members.

Participants reviewed progress in the establishment of the institutions that have

been established by the previous three summits.

The importance of creating the Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa was highlighted. The bank is expected to promote inter-regional capital flow, to build infrastructure projects, and to develop the private sector.

Countries in the process of ratification were encouraged to financially assist the "birth" of this bank so as to allow it to start operations in 1998.

Progress of work for the establishment of the Regional Economic and Development Working Group (REDWG) was also reviewed as well as the status of the Monitoring Committee Secretariat which was established at the Amman summit in 1995 and formally inaugurated in 1996. In addition, the activities of the monitoring committee and the REDWG were noted in the Copenhagen Action Plan pertaining to infrastructure,

tourism, trade and finance.

The conference praised Qatar for hosting MENA amidst calls for cancellation stating: "Recognising the difficult political circumstances, the participants expressed their appreciation for both Qatar's courageous leadership in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and for honouring its international commitment to host the conference."

Even though no country was designated as the venue for the next economic conference, participants affirmed that the next meeting would take place in 1998. The steering committee was given the responsibility to consult with the private sector as stated in the Casablanca Declaration in 1994, and to agree upon the theme for next year's conference.

The next host country would be announced at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos at the end of January 1998.

Russia, Iraq forge plan to resolve crisis

(Continued from page 1)

conditional offer on Monday for the return of the U.S. inspectors to Baghdad, travelled from Morocco to Moscow on Tuesday to meet Mr. Primakov.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Sun-

day that Washington has asked Russia and France to convince Iraq to back down on its refusal to deal with U.S. arms inspectors working for the U.N.

Since the U.S. inspectors were expelled from Baghdad last week, leading to the evacuation of most of their col-

leagues in the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for disarming Iraq, Washington has turned down Iraqi calls to open a dialogue.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Lee McClellan said "new arrangements" could be discussed once Iraq complied with U.N. resolu-

Hidden history or hidden agenda?

City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem
By Meron Benvenisti
University of California Press, 1996, 274 pages, \$24.95

THE TITLE of this book is appealing, making us expect to learn something new and significant about the Holy City. The author's credentials add to this impression. Meron Benvenisti is a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, and was once responsible for administering East Jerusalem and the Old City. Of course, we expect an Israeli bias, but if anyone knows about the subject, he must. As it turns out, though, what we do learn — by inverse example — is the need for writing history "from below" (from the viewpoint of ordinary people), in the style of the late English historian, E.P. Thompson, and others. In City of Stone, the authority, Benvenisti, tells us precious little about how people have really lived in Jerusalem over the years. That should have been important to him, since he speaks for a functional approach to solving the conflict.

The only major exception to this omission is the chapter, "Blueprint for Catastrophe," which deals with the inherent tension between preservation and development of the city. This is by far the most interesting chapter in the book, tracing architecture, landscaping and urban planning in the city from ancient times to the present. It is also the most honest, for it deals at length with how Palestinians have been displaced from Jerusalem by Israel's political planning.

The rest of the book is a history of Jerusalem that is more official than hidden, covering Ottoman rule and the British Mandate, up through the 1948 and 1967 wars and the intifada, and including a review of various plans for uniting, dividing or internationalising the city. The author begins by distancing himself from exclusive claims to the Holy City, whether promulgated by Israelis or Palestinians. In his metaphor, "The chronicles of

Jerusalem are a gigantic quarry from which each side has mined stones for the construction of its myths — and for throwing at each other" (pages 3-4).

Benvenisti sees that both sides have legitimate needs, concerns and attachments to the city. He strikes an impartial, pragmatic note, intimating that he wants his book to be part of the search for a solution.

Religious affairs are accorded great attention, which is natural considering Jerusalem's importance to the three monotheistic religions, and the intertwining of religious and nationalist aspirations. However, there is much emphasis on conflicts between different Christian sects, and problems caused by the idiosyncratic beliefs of parts of each religious community. In contrast, there is virtually nothing about the many social institutions run by religious denominations — Jerusalem's old and renowned schools, hospitals and welfare organisations. Their inclusion would have told more about real life.

Benvenisti's focus on multi-sided religious conflicts tends to downplay Jerusalem's place at the core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is about occupation and dispossession. Instead, in Benvenisti's rendition, the question of Jerusalem becomes "irrational at its core," an "intercommunal conflict," a "condition," and in his words, "Conditions have no solutions..." (pages 222-223). This contradicts the idea that he is in search of a solution. If there is none, then today's status quo — Israeli annexation of the city — will become the final status. At rock bottom, this is the intellectual counterpart to successive Israeli governments' refusal to contemplate any compromise on Jerusalem.

Benvenisti is critical of many Israeli policies. Yet, his reading of history always tends to come to Israel's defense on crucial points. His dispassionate style of writing allows him to insert his bias subtly, so it appears as fact. Early on, he writes that by the mid-1800s, Jews were a majority in

Jerusalem, though this has been disputed by U.N. figures, as well as by respected Palestinian scholars, like Henry Cattar and Walid Khalidi. Benvenisti's "fact" is based on estimates by European travellers, consuls and residents in the city. Ottoman figures show far fewer Jews, partly because many of them were foreigners, but this doesn't entirely account for the discrepancy. On this point, the German historian Alexander Scholch wrote that, for the 19th century, "no reliable breakdown of the population of Jerusalem is possible, as long as the Ottoman population registers and the registers of the European consulates concerned, have not been scrutinised carefully and in detail" (Jerusalem in History, edited by K.J. Asali, 1990). Benvenisti cannot be unaware of these doubts, yet he repeats this "fact" to support Israeli claims to the city no less than five times.

Many other "facts" are casually recorded in isolation, giving a false impression. Jordan is accused of upsetting the balance in Jerusalem in June 1967, by moving troops into the no-man's-land which divided the city, forcing Israel's army to conquer the whole city in self-defence. In general, Israeli military aggression is omitted as a cause of events. There are many references to houses "left" or "deserted" by Palestinians during the 1948 and 1967 wars, without telling what made them leave. Yet, Benvenisti must have read the IDF documents

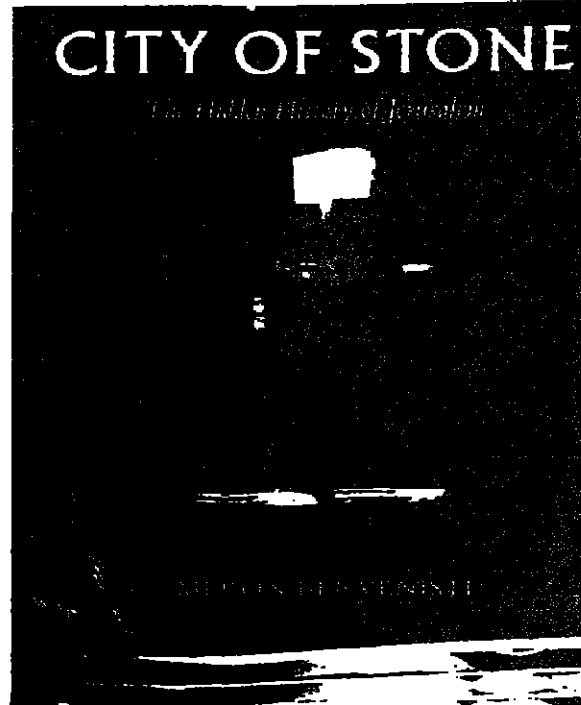
declassified in the mid-80s which estimated that most Palestinians who left in 1948, did so due to Israeli military actions. On the other hand, Palestinians are blamed for revolting in 1936, since, according to Benvenisti, they had no chance of winning. The message "hidden" between the lines seems to be that it is best to acquiesce to the fate dealt out by Israeli military might.

The history Benvenisti has written is neither new nor hidden. It is a sophisticated replay of previously heard arguments for the world to accept the Israeli-dominated status quo. Presumably, that was his hidden agenda in writing a book which is obviously geared to U.S. audiences, where many are too ignorant of Middle East history to detect his bias. The only strange thing in this context is that Benvenisti scarcely mentions the U.S. in his book, or its extensive aid to Israel.

Sally Bland

BOOK REVIEW

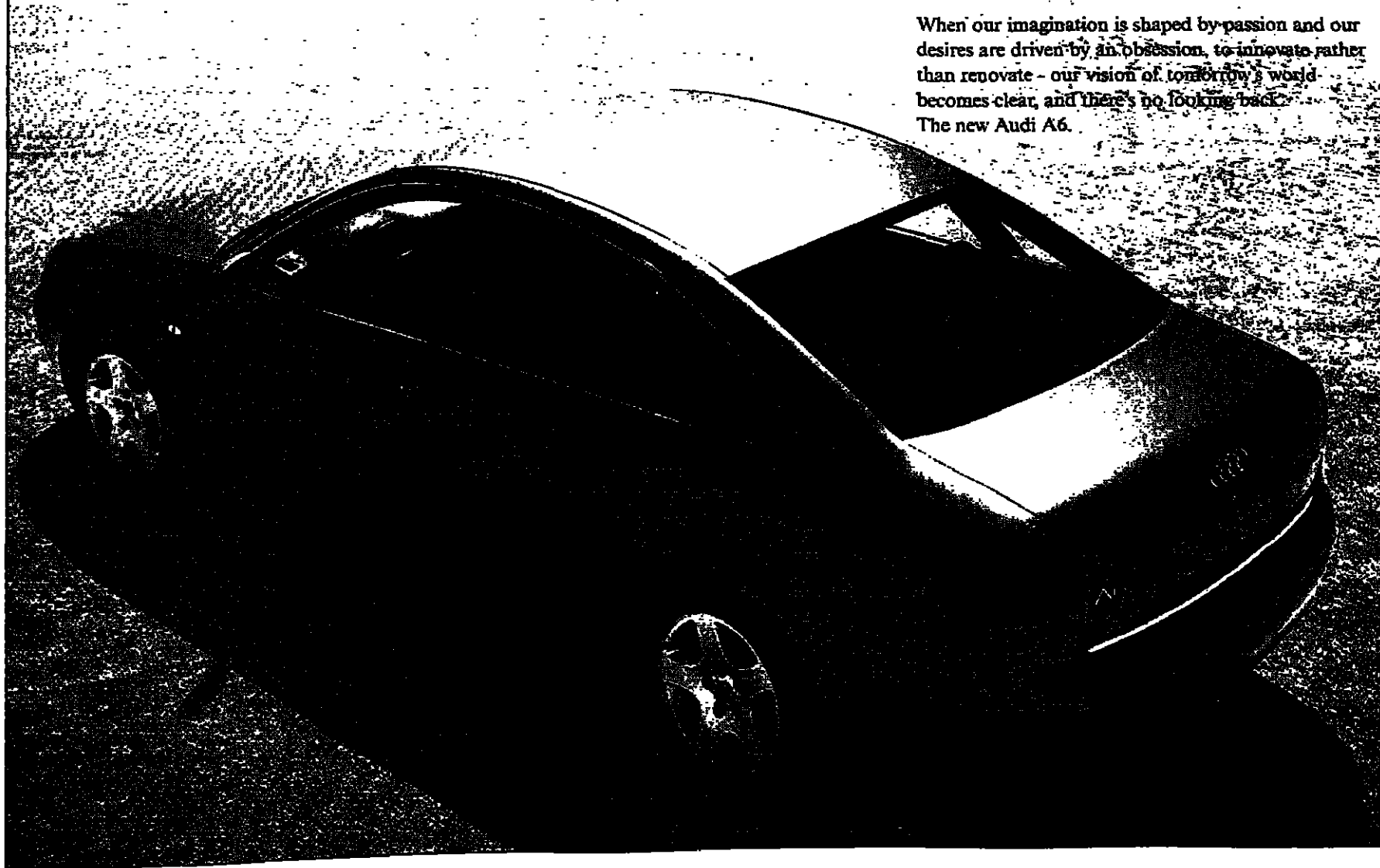
CITY OF STONE



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Government modifies customs duty on many products, raw materials

AMMAN (Petra) — The government Tuesday reduced customs duty on 46 commodities and raw materials used in industry, and removed all customs duty on processed food, sewing needles and diapers for old people.

Emerging from a Cabinet meeting, Finance Minister Suleiman Hafez said the Council of Ministers discussed his recommendations and took this decision which aims at encouraging investment and providing protection to locally-manufactured products and giving Jordanian goods further opportunities to compete on

foreign markets.

Mr. Hafez said that with the reduction of duty on raw materials, the local industries can produce less costly goods and can provide the local markets and others abroad with reasonably-priced commodities.

The minister said the items affected by the decision will be subjected to between five and 10 per cent duty from now on instead of 20 to 35 per cent.

The Cabinet decision, he noted, exempts from duty processed food, cheddar cheese, processed turkey, palm oil, mango juice, and inputs used in the process-

ing of mortadella.

Items on which customs duty is reduced include raw materials used in the chemical industries, chemical detergents, plastic and aluminium containers, raw marble and granite stone, cigarette paper, pipes, aluminium wires, refrigerators parts, auto parts, computer components and parts used in making cigarette lighters among others.

The minister noted that the Cabinet decided to increase customs tariffs on garlic, aluminium plates and minced meat in a bid to provide protection to local products.

Free trade is essential for MENA prosperity, participants at Doha economic conference told

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

DOHA — A free trade area in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is a fact committed by the Barcelona Process, according to participants in the panel entitled: "The Changing Economic Scene in the Mediterranean," at the Doha Conference.

"The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership has created new incentives for investment in emerging Mediterranean markets," they said. "More liberal trade with Europe will reduce government revenue from import tariffs through the acceptance of the Mediterranean countries to modernise and implement reforms."

The association agreement is not only a trade partnership, but also has political and human dimensions, participants said.

Jose Miguel Zaldo, chairman of the joint business committee of Spain and Morocco, affirmed that free trade in the MENA region would become a reality before the year 2010.

From a business perspective, he said there is no doubt that this area will become prosperous especially for countries that have signed the association agreement at an early stage.

For states that reduce tariffs by dismantling barriers the business will be more competitive, Mr. Zaldo indicated.

However, he mentioned some obstacles to the Euro-Mediterranean agreement in the MENA region and described them as drawbacks such as the high import duties, the fear of businesses losing protection, and the lack of legislative clarity in some MENA countries.

The importance of trained human resources was highlighted by Nello Uccelletti, managing director of the Middle East Technipetrol in Italy.

He emphasised the need to train human resources as regional growth is connected with the increase in input resources and improving technology.

Social progress, he said, is a condition and can be achieved through socio-economic development.

Mr. Uccelletti noted that the integration generated from this partnership has to be compatible and should preserve the cultural diversity of the region.

The promotion of economic initiatives, he stressed, should be with the full support of the government.

Mathias Burchard, economic advisor at the European Union in Brussels, said that the Barcelona Process is not a revolutionary and short-term process "but evolutionary and long-term."

The objective of the agreement, he stated, is to promote pluralism and democracy, the integration of economies through free trade, peace and stability, and to improve the standard of living.

He was optimistic that foreign investment would be attracted to the region as political and administrative climates improve and economic growth picks up.

He noted that this MENA conference was important but would be in vain if peace is not established among the countries of the region.

Free trade is essential for the prosperity of the MENA region, emphasised Kjar-tan Johansson, secretary general of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in Geneva.

He reiterated that free trade would lead to prosperity and peace as "free-trade is about competition and investment," he said giving the example of the EFTA initiative which had at first been inward looking and now is outward looking.

Mr. Johansson noted that despite the fact EFTA was not part of the Barcelona Process, it managed to develop its own Mediterranean policy.

Countries of the region should make free-trade agreements among themselves, he said.

Angus Blair, director of the Middle East and North Africa Research (ING) Barling in the United Kingdom, highlighted that finance was the catalyst for regional change, and that the association agreement was important for providing the impetus for industrial reform.

Fifty per cent of the imports of Arab states, he said, comes from the European Union whereas inter-regional trade amongst these countries amounts to seven per cent.

He also illustrated that less than one per cent of direct foreign investment was in this region.

"There is a definite need for transparency, privatisation, and the flow of infor-

mation from governments to investors," he said.

One Israeli businessman raised the case of Jordan and Israel where joint-business ventures are already taking place.

He said that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership posed a problem regarding the issue of the cumulation of the rules of origin.

The Products Delta, a joint Jordanian-Israeli project in Irbid hiring over 700 Jordanian employees, are forced to go to the United

States only, he said, as the rule of origin prohibits these products from going into Europe.

This was seen, by the audience, as an obstacle for enlarging investment.

Jordan is to sign the association agreement with the European Union in Brussels on Nov. 24th. It is hoped that with more liberal trade with Europe, government revenue will be reduced from import tariffs.

Panelists believed that the cumulation of the rule of

origin was an important ingredient in developing free trade between the MENA region and Europe.

They conceded that the cumulation rules are easy among countries that have the same rules and standards.

It was believed the MENA countries were not doing enough, but it was also believed that as we near the year 2010, countries will feel the competition and be motivated into action and economic reform.

Israel says Qatar gas deal possible

DOHA (R) — Israel and Qatar are considering reviving a deal for Israel to buy about \$2 billion in Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from the Arab Gulf state through U.S. energy giant Enron Corp., an Israeli cabinet minister has said.

Disclosing the contacts to reporters in the Qatari capital Doha, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharansky declined to go into details and said any seri-

ous negotiations would have to be conducted at the technocratic rather than political level.

"I had a meeting yesterday with the energy minister of Qatar. We agreed to reexamine the situation... certainly we are both ready to reexamine if there will be a need or possibility to renew the deal," Mr. Sharansky told reporters.

Qatari Energy and Industry Minister Abdul-

lah Ben Hamad Attiyah told Reuters he had no comment on Mr. Sharansky's remarks.

Israel and Qatar signed a preliminary agreement at the 1995 Middle East Economic Summit in Amman. It was Israel's first public deal with an Arab Gulf state and hailed as a dividend of Middle East peacemaking.

Since then the deal was widely perceived to have died, in part because Israel was considering other, possibly cheaper natural gas supplies, but also because of a breakdown in regional peace moves.

Industry sources said differences had also arisen between Egypt and Qatar over supplying Israel with gas. They said Egypt might supply it through a pipeline more cheaply than Qatar, which would have to liquefy it and ship it on tankers.

The minister, part of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet, admitted confusion about the status of the accord with Qatar, telling reporters: "They say we dropped it... we are now checking into who truly dropped it."

Mr. Sharansky said Israel was still considering buying natural gas from Egypt and other countries. Israel has also weighed buying gas, seen as crucial to advancing its economy, from non-Arab states including Russia.

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Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	NLG	FRF	11/19/97 18:52
US Dollar	1.7253	0.5908	1.4034	125.90	1.4148	1689.00	1.9451	5.7787	
DE Mark	0.5796	0.3421	0.8136	72.93	0.8185	978.98	1.1271	3.3475	
GB Sterling	1.6925	2.8215	2.3750	213.10	2.3847	2880.33	3.2918	9.7787	
CH Franc	0.7126	122.85	0.4284	88.88	1.0075	1203.12	138.52	4.1125	
JP Yen	0.0078	1.3701	0.4688	1.1142	1.1233	13.41	154.33	4.5845	
CA Dollar	0.7068	1.2388	0.6189	1.0004	1.12	1204.54	1.3865	4.1195	
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0208	0.3482	0.0830	1343.91	0.8370	11.50	3.4162	
NL Guilder	0.3141	88.68	0.3034	72.16	84.68	0.7271	868.15	2.9675	
FR Franc	0.1730	0.2988	0.1022	24.3020	21.77	0.2450	33.66	33.6600	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	NLG	FRF	11/19/97 18:52
US Dollar	1.4124	0.7080	3.7503	0.3770	3.6398	0.3032	3.6728	1525.00	3.4045
Jordan Dinar	0.2666	0.1888	0.5297	0.5325	5.1410	0.4282	5.1877	2153.95	4.8086
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	0.5297	0.5325	5.1410	0.4282	5.1877	2153.95	4.8086
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8781	9.3883	0.97	9.68	0.8043	9.74	4045.31	9.0310
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0304	1.0304	0.0833	1.01	418.98	0.9354	
Lebanese/1000	0.68	0.4643	2.4592	0.2472	2.3868	0.1988	2.4083	2.2325	
Egyptian	0.2937	0.2080	1.1016	0.1107	1.0691	0.0891	1.0788	447.94	

Energy									
Oil	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit	Price	Unit
Brent	19.78	19.77							
W. Tena	20.20	20.26							
Bonny	19.78	19.77							
Dubai	18.75	18.75							
UL Gas	190.00	196.00							

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	NLG	FRF	11/19/97 18:52
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.1888	0.5297	0.5325	5.1410	0.4282	5.1877	2153.95	4.8086
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.47004	0.16082	0.38226	34.2912				
KW Dinar	3.2982	5.69476	1.94818	4.62963	415.455				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.57875	1.56891	3.72439	334.113				
CY Pound	1.9685	3.3983	1.1627	2.7636	247.896				

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	ITL	NLG	FRF	11/19/97 18:52
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.1999	1.2059							
DE Mark	0.4093	0.4113							
CH Franc	0.5028	0.5051							
FR Franc	0.1222	0.1228							
JP Yen	0.563	0.5658							
NL Guilder	0.3632	0.365							
IT Lira	0.4178	0.4187							

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	% Chg	High	Low	Pr. Chg	Pr. Chg	Pr. Chg	Pr. Chg
New York DOW JONES	7707.55	9.33	0.12	7715.58	7699.13	7698.22			
New York S&P 500	946.52	0.32	0.03	947.77	943.83	946.2			
London FT-SE 100	4839.5	-27.5	-0.57	4859.9	4827.3	4857			
Tokyo NIKKEI 225	16726.57	443.25	2.72	17006.1	16089.8	16283.3			
Paris CAC 40	2776.88	3.89	0.14	2783.58	2762.58	2772.99			
Frankfurt DAX	3833.47	38.88	1.02	3834.83	3798.79	3794.61			

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

- Electrical units
- Bridge
- happening
- Food bird
- Complain
- trifling
- Fisherman's
- need
- Fragrance
- Small group
- Something for the poor
- Cause to move slowly
- Roman emperor
- Haggard work
- Inclined
- Roundup
- Hired hands
- Scottish highlander
- Expert
- Lass
- Suitable for food
- Tuchman opus
- Wandering
- Engine sound
- Spanish uncle
- Profound
- Level
- German
- industrial city
- One: pref.
- Enzyme: sufl.
- Florida city
- Caesar or Waldorf
- Unruly youngster
- Walter's item
- Reflection
- French composer
- Accumulated knowledge
- Domingo, e.g.
- Building wings
- Terminates

by Frank R. Jackson

DOWN

- Court proceedings
- Japanese ship word
- Smug one
- Mate
- Political list
- Humdinger
- Certain cactus
- Military student
- Greek war god
- Negri, of the
- Tentmaker
- Dissent word
- Japanese commander
- Come into view
- Classified
- Yellowish pigment
- Name in farm machinery
- Time periods: abbr.
- Head for Greta Green
- Performer's engagement
- Adjective
- Holmes' "Venner"
- Admit
- Purpose
- Compulsion
- Hiatus
- Amusement
- Practicable
- Come to rest
- Beneath
- Roadsters
- Ditto
- Author Milne
- Shakespearean heavy
- Russian mountain range
- Chutzpah
- Firmness
- Aromatic plant
- Has a look
- on (suppress)

Peanuts

LET'S SAY YOU AND I ARE MARRIED, SEE, AND YOU'RE DOWN IN THE BASEMENT PLAYING YOUR PIANO...

KLUNK!

ALL RIGHT, LET'S SAY YOU'RE OUT IN THE GARAGE PLAYING YOUR PIANO...

Andy Capp

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MY SON-IN-LAW?

YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE THE PROBLEMS I'VE GOT, MISSES, AND NO MONEY TO SOLVE 'EM

YOU'VE GOT MY SYMPATHY, LAD, I'VE KNOWN WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE HARD UP

AND IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU I'LL KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE ALL OVER AGAIN!

Mutt'n'Jeff

BRING, WILL YOU KINDLY REMOVE YOUR HEAD SO I CAN SEE TELEVISION!

WELL, IF YOU DON'T MOVE, I WILL!

WHEREVER I MOVE HE MOVES!

THE BETTER HALF

GLASBERGEN

"Maybe I got married too young. We had to postpone our wedding because the best man was grounded."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LYPHS

APITO

SAKMAD

EMBALC

Answer: SHE

Yesterday's Jumbles: VILLA BALKY JOSTLE GARBLE

Answer: For prison guards they are the best of times and the worst of times — JAIL "BREAKS"

Pippen-less Bulls slide from NBA summit

CHICAGO (AFP) — Michael Jordan is facing unprecedented defensive pressure with Scottie Pippen sidelined by a foot injury and the Chicago Bulls struggling to find their championship form.

The Bulls, National Basketball Association champions in five of the past seven years, have struggled to a 6-4 start and trail unbeaten Atlanta by four games in the Central Division.

Critics say Jordan, 34, is not the player he once was. His shooting accuracy is only 38 per cent. His scoring is down to a career-low average of 24.1 points a game.

But he is being guarded relentlessly by opponents, who have less fear of him and triple-teaming Jordan without Pippen on the court. He might be the game's greatest player, but he cannot win alone.

"I tell you, they're throwing the kitchen sink at me," Jordan said.

Age is a factor. At an average age of 30.8 years, the Chicago roster is the NBA's second-oldest. And with Pippen out for another seven weeks after foot surgery, the Bulls have not shown they are a championship club without him.

"We relied on (Pippen) so much in

terms of his leadership as a ball-handler that we haven't been able to step up and get into the rhythm of our offense (without him)," Jordan said.

"It's been very difficult and I don't think we have had one night where we've been fluent and looked comfortable in our offense," he added.

The Bulls led the league in scoring last season with an average of 103.1 points. They average a next-to-worst 88.4 a game now while allowing 84.9, third-best in the league but still woeful compared to past years.

Dennis Rodman, Toni Kukoc, Luc Longley and Ron Harper have not shown they can provide points without Jordan, lacking the ability to create good scoring chances on their own.

Rodman's shoddy rebounding has forced Jordan into new roles. Jordan is averaging a career-best 8.8 rebounds a game, the most of any NBA guard, and his 2.1 steals are above last season's average.

"When (Jordan) tries to do too much, he feels there's a lack of aggressiveness by his teammates," Chicago coach Phil Jackson said.

"They don't know what to do or they're floundering, so he picks up the ball and starts carrying it on his own

and right now he's not shooting well enough to do that.

"Our offense has always been able to provide Michael space to score, and the other players an opportunity to hit open shots when he's double-teamed. Right now, what's really frustrating is that he's finding guys off the double-team and we're not making those shots," Jackson commented.

The Bulls avenged a 21-point loss to Shawn Kemp and Cleveland, a low-point defeat that had Jordan comparing his club unfavourably to a first-year expansion unit.

"As long as they're still putting jewelry on their fingers this doesn't mean anything," Kemp said of the Bulls. "They're still the kings of the hill."

The Bulls' place atop the hill is slipping. But Chicago's Harper has faith.

"Sleep on us if you want to," Ron Harper said. "Everybody's saying that we can be beaten. But after we get everybody back, we'll be fine. We might not have a good start like the last few years. But when the smoke clears, we're going to still be on top. That I know, because this team has pride."

Blazers rout Mavericks

PORTLAND, OREGON

(AP) — Arvydas Sabonis scored 22 of his 24 points in an overpowering first-half performance against Shawn Bradley Monday night as the Portland Trail Blazers routed Dallas 120-75, the Mavericks' sixth straight loss.

Sabonis, who also had 12 rebounds, was 10-for-10 from the field in the first half. He played just 24 minutes and missed only one of 12 shots.

Isiah Rider added 19 points and seven assists for the Blazers, who have beaten Dallas 10 consecutive times. Gary Trent added 16 points, including his first career 3-pointer. Seven Portland players scored in double figures.

Portland, off to a 7-2 start, has out rebounded all nine of its opponents, but none more so than its 59-30 domination of the boards against the Mavericks.

The Blazers out rebounded the Mavs 14-1 to start the game, led 30-10 early in the second quarter and never led by less than 17 after that. The Blazers' reserves played the final quarter, running up the 45-point final margin, the biggest of the game.

Dennis Scott scored 12 for Dallas. A.C. Green, playing in his hometown, had 10 points in his 905th consecutive game, one short of the NBA record.



A.C. Green (L) of the Dallas Mavericks is blocked by Brian Grant of the Portland Trail Blazers, during first quarter of NBA game in Portland. The Blazers won 120-75 (Reuters photo)

Forget Sampras, work on staying No. 2, Newcombe tells Rafter

BRISBANE (AFP)

Australian Pat Rafter has been told to forget chasing after Pete Sampras' No. 1 world tennis ranking and concentrate on holding down his No. 2 spot.

Rafter completed a marvelous year when he surged from 63 to two in the world, with public expectation here that he will press on and become No. 1.

But John Newcombe, the

last Australian to hold the world No. 1 ranking 25 years ago, says forget it.

"In my opinion, Pat should concentrate on solidifying his position at No. 2, 3 or 4 in the world and on continuing to play solid tennis," said Newcombe Tuesday.

"He shouldn't be worrying about Pete Sampras yet and I told him that six weeks ago," Sampras, who has extended his stay at No. 1 to 200 weeks, was this week voted the best player of the past 25 years ahead of Swede Bjorn Borg by a panel of 100 former and current players, journalists and tennis officials.

Newcombe said Rafter should set his sights on keeping former No. 2 Michael Chang in his shadow and worry about Sampras later.

"The only expectation he should have (next year) is doing his absolute best when he takes the court."

"If he's playing his best in 1999 and Sampras is still playing, then it'll be a serious contest."

Rafter will then prepare for next year's first Grand Slam, the Australian Open, starting in Melbourne on January 19.

Madrid back to within a point of Barcelona

MADRID (AFP)

Defending champions Real Madrid kept within a point of Spanish league pacesetters Barcelona here on Monday with a come from behind 3-1 win over struggling Valladolid.

Barcelona had scraped home 3-2 over third-placed Celta Vigo on Sunday — ending a run of three straight defeats, including two in the Champions League, their worst losing streak in seven years.

Real Madrid's Brazilian right back Roberto Carlos was the

champions' inspiration creating two of their goals after Croatian Alen Paternac had stunned the home fans with a second minute opener for Valladolid.

Sweeping change in tennis rankings due for year 2000

HANOVER (AFP)

Men's tennis will follow the Formula One motorsport format starting in the year 2000 when the ranking system changes to an annual points race with the year-end winner claiming the champion's title.

That sweeping change, along with a proposal to more-or-less merge the ATP Tour with the ailing women's circuit, slim down the elite-level men's tournaments from the current Mercedes Super 9 to seven and tighten player participation requirements were all presented at the weekend by ATP Tour CEO Mark Miles following the \$3.3 million ATP World Championships in Hanover.

"Players will be required to play the four Grand Slams, the seven elite series events and seven other events of their choosing," said the American boss of the Tour.

"In the rankings, everyone will begin the year with zero points. If they miss an event, they miss the opportunity to earn points at that event."

"The player at the top of the bill at the end of the year is No. 1." The Tour is also hoping to bring the women on board at the seven elite events and combine the men's and women's year-end championships into one mega-event — possibly even including doubles.

Another desired side-effect: killing off the September Grand Slam Cup in Munich by bringing the Grand Slam Committee of the International Tennis Federation into the

fold for the season finale.

"We want to be in the marketplace with our plans by the first half of 1998," said Miles. "One of our first priorities will be to speak with the women about the measures."

The plan to lop off two of the Mercedes Super 9 events — and change the cement Lipton in Florida in March to clay — is sure to spark controversy.

A blood feud is expected between three top European clay events vying for two spots on the new 2000 calendar — Rome, 100-year-old Monte Carlo and Hamburg.

Miles said that the Tour has plans to go ahead with the restructuring and is hoping that the women's Tour and the ITF participate. Discussions with the other bodies will intensify in the coming months, he said.

The Tour will also take control of all marketing and television rights for the elite events, giving the tournaments affected a guarantee and a share of profits.

In addition, plans call for setting up an Olympic-style bidding process for cities around the world to present their case for hosting the end-of-season championship.

Bringing the faltering women's tour — soon to be without a sponsor — could be the most complicated part of the ambitious plan.

"We've issued an invitation to the women," said Miles. "We're not putting a gun to their head. We hope to decide these things by the end of 1998. We expect a give-and-take format."

Woodies head ATP doubles field

HARTFORD (AFP)

Defending champions Todd Woodbridge and Mark Woodforde will be the top seeds in the eight-team field for the ATP World Doubles Championships that begin here on Wednesday.

The Woodies will make their seventh consecutive appearance in the \$500,000 event, matching the record run of finals trips by John McEnroe and Peter Fleming from 1978 to 1984.

The Aussies have reached the championship match four of the past five years, winning in 1992 and 1996 and losing in 1993 and 1994. The Woodies have already sealed a third consecutive year-end number one rating.

This year, Woodforde and Woodbridge won the Australian Open and a record fifth consecutive Wimbledon doubles title.

Dutchmen Jacco Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis will make their fifth visit to the event as the second seeds. They beat the Woodies for the 1993 crown but are 8-6 overall in their rivalry with the Aussie pair.

This year, Eltingh and Haarhuis have won six titles, sharing the tour lead with the India duo of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, who are seeded fifth and assured of India's best doubles season in ATP history.

Canada's Sebastian Lareau and Alex O'Brien of the United States, who lost to the Woodies in last year's final here, are seeded sixth, one place above Lareau's compatriot Daniel Nestor and Mark Knowles of the Bahamas.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH

DOUBLE IN HASTE, REPERT AT LEISURE

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ 8

♥ K 9 8 7 4

♦ A 10 8 4

♣ 9 4

EAST

♠ Q J 3 2

♥ V

♦ K J 2

♣ 8 7 5 2

SOUTH

♠ A K 10

♥ 8 5 3 2

♦ 9 8 5

♣ A Q

The bidding:

WEST NORTH EAST

1NT Pass 2♠ Pass

20 Pass 30 Pass

40 Pass 40 Pass

Opening lead: Seven of ♠

Don't double if, by doing so, you

are revealing a key feature of your

hand. A skilled declarer is more

likely to use that information to

offset any poor line of the cards.

In response to South's 15-17

point not-rump opening, North

constructed an invitational sequence

with hearts as trumps. South men-

tally tipped a con and opted to accept. West could not believe the opponents would make the contract, and made the mistake of telling them so.

Without the double, declarer would surely have captured East's jack of spades with the king and led a trump to the king. When East shows out, South cannot recover and must lose at least three trumps and a diamond. With a trump stuck announced on the left, declarer was able to adopt an unusual line.

At trick two declarer led a low trump and, when West followed with the six, the seven was finessed. The ace of diamonds was cashed and the ten of diamonds was led, and the hand was over. No matter which card East played, declarer was able to limit the defenders to one diamond trick and two trumps.

Bridge is such an easy game!

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL HEAD OF MIDDLE EAST DIVISION

The post holder will coordinate and manage the BirdLife Conservation Programme in the Middle East, particularly focusing on developing the strengths of the nationally-based Partners and establishing new Partners. The post will be based in Amman, Jordan at the offices of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, the BirdLife Partner in Jordan.

The successful applicant will be a good manager with experience of wildlife conservation and development in the Middle East. Ideally with an NGO, will have an ability to work independently and a willingness to work long hours. He/she must be willing to travel to all countries in the region. Fluency in Arabic and English essential.

Please apply with CV (in English) to:

Richard Porter
BirdLife International
Wellbrook Court, Giron Road, Giron,
Cambridge, UK, CB3 0NA.
Tel: +44-(0)-1223-277318
Fax: +44-(0)-1223-277200
E-mail: Richard.Porter@BirdLife.org.uk

OR
Director General
The Royal Society for
the Conservation of Nature
P.O. Box 1215, Jubelha 11941, Jordan

Closing date for applications the 31st of December

NOTICE OF SALE

Date and Time of Sale:

• THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1997
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Location:

• American Embassy Warehouse, Abdoun (Use the Back Gate).

Items to be Sold:

• Office and residential furniture, appliances, equipment, vehicles and miscellaneous.

Conditions of Sale:

• Sale is conducted by sealed bid.
• All property is sold on as-is, where-is, non-returnable basis for cash payment without refund or warranty.
• Bid forms and list of lots will be available at time of sale.
• All items will be available for inspection at sale time.
• A deposit of 20% of the total bid is required at time of bid in cash JD only.
• All bids must be deposited by 12:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 20.
• All bidders will be notified and deposit refunded to unsuccessful bidders by Sunday, November 23.
• All properties must be paid for and removed by Monday, November 24.
• If not removed by November 24, a storage fee of JD50,000 per day for each lot will be imposed.



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	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Fran Drescher & Timothy Dalton ... in	Patrick Stewart & Jonathan Frakes ... in	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi... in	Rowan Atkinson... in	ABDOUN Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi... in	ABDOUN	NOW ON DAILY
	THE BEAUTICIAN & THE BEAST	STAR TREK FIRST CONTACT	AL MASEER (Arabic)	MR. BEAN	AL MASEER (Arabic)	ONE FINE DAY	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:45	Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
				SLEEP WALKERS Shows: 3:30, 6:00 only		HERCULES Shows: 3:30, 5:00	For reservations call: 640155, 625155
						Thursdays and Fridays 12:30 afternoon	

Handball's 1st Division Championship resumes today

9 teams in Arab Cup Winners' Cup starting Dec. 3

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Handball Federation (JHF) announced that nine teams from seven Arab countries have confirmed participation in the 2nd Arab Cup Winners' Cup Championship which will be held in Amman December 3-13.

"We are proud to host this championship in which top teams from neighbouring Arab countries will be taking part," JHF President Sari Hamdan told the Jordan Times.

Held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumayya Bint Al Hassan the championship will bring together Egypt's Al Ahli and Al Olympi, Qatar's Al Sadd and Qatar Clubs, Al Qadissieh from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Al Shabab from United Arab

Standings after first leg

Team	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Al Ahli	7	1	-	289	219	15
Salt	7	1	-	261	207	15
Arabi	6	-	2	290	235	12
Hussein	5	-	3	235	235	10
Amman	3	1	4	250	230	7
Umm Jozeh	3	1	4	212	250	7
Y. Shouneh	2	-	6	236	236	4
Kufroum	-	1	7	217	275	1
Kufrajan	-	1	7	225	276	1

Schedule of first week

Salt vs. Umm Jozeh	Nov. 19	Sports Palace
Hussein vs. Amman	Nov. 19	Sports Palace
Arabi vs. Kufrajan	Nov. 20	Al Hassan City
Y. Shouneh vs. Kufroum	Nov. 20	Al Hassan City

Emirates and Al Sadaga from Lebanon, Jordan's Al Arabi who are currently third in the First Division will be the sole team representing the Kingdom.

Hamdan said Jordan's league leaders Al Ahli have not confirmed participation in the event.

Two countries that will not take part in the event are Palestine and Iraq who will be absent "for technical reasons," he said.

The JHF president said Jordan has a big chance to reach an advanced position in the event.

"We pin our hopes on Al Arabi to lead Jordan's handball win," he said. "We hope to take a good position."

Meanwhile the second leg of the First Division Championship will start Wednesday with nine teams taking part.

The teams are Al Arabi, Umm Jozeh, Salt, Al Hussein, Amman, Yarmouk Shouneh, Kufroum, Kufrajan and Al Ahli.

"We expect a heated competition among the teams," Hamdan noted.

Al Ahli lead on goal difference with 15 points followed by Al Salt also with 15 points, while Al Arabi are third with 12 points.

Wihdat lose 3-2, conclude matches at Arab Champions Cup

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

JORDAN'S AL WIHDAAT Tuesday lost 3-2 to hosts Al Afriqi capping their participation in the 13th Arab Champions Cup which concludes in Tunisia Nov. 23.

Al Wihdat played their best match of the eight-team tournament but had already forfeited their chance to qualify to the second round after losing the opening match 3-1 to Saudi Arabia's Ahli Jeddah before crashing out 7-0 to Algeria's Widad Talmasan in their second match.

Al Afriqi's win enabled them to top Group A and qualify to the second round alongside Ahli Jeddah who beat Widad Talmasan 1-0 in an earlier match.

Tunisia's Al Safqasi and Egypt's Al Ahli qualified from Group B which also included Kuwait's Kathima, and Al Am'ari of Palestine.



Ali Maher (L) of Egypt's Al Ahli tries to pass defender Ahmad Ibrahim of the Kuwaiti side Kathima during their Arab Champions Cup game in Tunis. Al Ahli won 2-0 (Reuters photo)

The top two teams of each group will start the second round Nov. 21.

Al Afriqi had a 2-0 lead at halftime by goals from Abdul Jalil Hada in the 26th minute and Sabri Jaddallah in the 34th, and it looked like the hosts would easily score more goals on their way to the Group A lead.

However, Al Wihdat's Ali Juma'a boosted his team's morale early in the second half when he scored from a powerful shot in the 53rd minute.

Four minutes later Mohammad Koweini gave Al Afriqi a 3-1 lead and the Tunisian team, aided by the home crowd, had command of the match although they failed to score again.

Al Wihdat's Marwan Shamali scored his team's second goal in the 63rd minute ending the match 3-2.

Al Wihdat's officials had hoped that their team would end their participation on a positive note, two days after the teams suffered a humiliating defeat that led many onlookers to criticise the club for taking part at a time the team was not well-prepared to play against more experienced teams with professional players on their lineups.

Team officials had attributed their defeat to the fact that players lost morale after a disputed penalty followed by two goals which the players contested as clearly offside. That in addition to being reduced to ten players towards the end of the first half led to the mistakes the players committed allowing a stream of goals which could have been prevented.

Al Wihdat are scheduled to return home Friday to an impressive local record with an unbeaten run in the Premier League and a semi-final berth in the Jordan Cup.

With Tuesday's defeat, the Jordanian titleholders were once again out of the first round in their third Champions Cup appearance.

Having displayed an improved form this season and currently trained by well-known Iraqi coach Anwar Jassam, Al Wihdat's officials did not realise their aspirations of enabling the team to qualify to the second round of the event which has been dominated by Saudi and Iraqi teams in 9 of the past 12 championships.

This is only the fourth time Jordanian teams take part in the Arab Champions Cup.

Al Ahli took part in the inaugural competition in 1981 finishing last among the three competing teams. Al Faisali were the only Jordanian team to advance to the second round in 1993. Al Hussein played in the 1993 Cup, while Al Wihdat took part 1995 and 1996.

Final Group A standings

Team	P	W	D	L	Gf	Ga	Pts
Afriqi	3	2	1	-	6	3	7
Ahli Jeddah	3	2	-	2	4	4	7
Talmasan	3	1	1	1	7	1	4
Wihdat	3	-	-	3	3	13	-

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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Another disappointment for Agassi

LAS VEGAS (AFP) — Andre Agassi suffered another setback in his comeback quest, losing to 202nd-ranked Christian Vinck of Germany in the finals of a Challenger tour event here. Vinck was the lowest-ranked player to automatically qualify for the \$50,000 event, concluded Sunday in Agassi's home town. Former World No. 1 Agassi has struggled all year, weakened by a wrist injury and poor training.

African country, hosts the next edition of the 16-team tournament from February 7-28 and Zimbabwe is the venue for the 2000 finals. CAF said the 1999 African youth championships will be played in Ghana and the junior championships in Guinea.

Ronaldo backs Del Piero

MILAN (AFP) — Ronaldo gave Italy's coach Cesare Maldini a piece of advice here on Monday — "start using Alessandro Del Piero." Del Piero, who scored twice in Italy's memorable 3-3 draw with Brazil at last summer's Tournoi de France, has never established himself in Maldini's starting line-up. The Juventus striker has played in each of Italy's last three games — but only ever as a late substitute. And Ronaldo had a tip for Maldini, who is 44 years his senior. "If I was coach of the national team I would always use someone like Del Piero, he's a truly great player," he said. "But obviously, Italy are coached by someone who has different ideas about football to me." Inter coach Gigi Simoni supported the Brazilian's view, saying: "You need muscle in a team, but you also need quality. I back the more technical players, because the kind of football I prefer to watch is the kind you get from the likes of Ronaldo and Del Piero."

Coetzer ousted in WTA upset; Pierce wins

NEW YORK (AFP) — France's Nathalie Tauziat upset fourth seed Amanda Coetzer of South Africa 6-3, 6-3, here Monday to reach the quarter-finals of the \$2 million WTA Championships.

France's Mary Pierce and Romania's Irina Spirlea also advanced at the season-ending event, which matches the top 16 players from the year in a week-long showdown at Madison Square Garden.

Seventh seed Pierce beat Belgium's Sabine Appelmans 6-3, 6-4, while eighth seed Spirlea prevented a French sweep on the first night, downing Sandrine Testud 6-3, 5-7, 6-4.

Tauziat, at 30 the oldest player here, broke Coetzer's final two service games for her first victory in the event. She had won only one set in four prior matches in the tournament.

"I think I'm not like Beaujolais, but I am like the good wine," Tauziat said. "I've played well in the last month. I improved my game and got a lot of confidence. I knew I could beat her on a fast surface."

The Frenchwoman broke at love in the second game and held to take the first set, but then was within one point of falling behind 3-0 in the second before rallying from love-40 to break back.

"I can't say I've ever played well here and tonight was another example," said Coetzer, who fell to 1-4 at the event.

The loss marked a disappointing end to an outstanding season for Coetzer, who rose to a career-high fourth in the rankings.

Coetzer beat former number one Steffi Graf three times before June and also downed World No. 1 Martina Hingis at Leipzig, one of only four losses the Swiss star has suffered this year.

Pierce, born in Montreal and living in the United States, showed few signs of the kidney infection that left her feeling weak and dizzy in recent weeks and forced her to pull out of tournaments in Filderstadt, Zurich, Moscow and Philadelphia.

The Australian Open runner-up moved well, hammered 28 winners and recorded three aces with a serve that registered 100 mph.

"This is the best I feel like I have been playing lately," Pierce said. "It has been taking me a little while to feel like I'm back in the groove again. But tonight was the closest I felt to being happy with the way I played."

Spirlea held off a determined Testud in the last game for the victory.

Hingis, whose 12 titles this year include the Wimbledon, U.S. Open and Australian Open crowns, plays her opening-round match against Brenda Schultz McCarthy of the Netherlands on Tuesday.

Hingis made her debut at the event last year, losing in the five-set final to Graf.

In other matches, second seed Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic plays

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Woodies head ATP doubles field

place with 1998, said Mercedes, he cemented his status as a sure thing.

CE ON, TER

THE GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE

Turkey's Islamist Welfare leader fights dissolution bid before constitutional court

ANKARA (AFP) — Former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan went before the constitutional court Tuesday to defend his Islam-based Welfare Party against charges that it undermined the secular state and should be dissolved.

Mr. Erbakan, 71, made no comment to reporters as he entered the court.

His testimony constitutes the latest step in a judicial procedure launched in May by a top court prosecutor seeking to outlaw the party.

Mr. Erbakan's testimony to the 11-member constitutional court could continue until Wednesday, according to his Welfare Party, known also as Refah.

Prosecutor Vural Savas has asked the court, which is expected to issue a ruling by the end of the year, to abolish the Welfare Party as it had become a centre for activities undermining the secular state and thus was incompatible with the Turkish constitution.

Last week Mr. Savas told the court, Turkey's highest judicial body, that "no party, in Turkey or abroad, deserves to be dissolved as much as Refah does."

The defence mounted by Mr. Erbakan, who is allowed to give his testimony seated because of his age, centres on the party's claim that it is

upholding democracy.

"We are not defending Refah, we are defending democracy, human rights and the rule of law," said party leader, Oguzhan Asilturk, on Nov. 11.

Another party official, Abdullah Gul, said Monday: "There is a psychological war being waged against us. But we will struggle and we will prevail because we have the support of the grass roots." A dissolution would "definitely backfire," he warned.

Most commentators, however, consider the dissolution of Refah as inevitable, and in anticipation of such a verdict, Refah leaders have already laid the groundwork for a new Islamist party.

A decision against the party would mean that Mr. Erbakan would lose his seat in parliament and thus the immunity which prevented his prosecution earlier over allegations of incitement to hatred, Turkish newspapers said.

On Monday, the Hurriyet and Sabah dailies said the allegations were on file in parliament and would be forwarded to the state security court if Mr. Erbakan lost his parliamentary immunity.

The ex-premier and several other party leaders could also be banned from politics for five years if their party were

abolished.

The incitement allegations reportedly stem from a contention by Mr. Erbakan in April 1994 that his party would in any case achieve power. "The only question is whether it will be peacefully or after blood-letting," he reportedly said.

The hearing is the first time in the history of the Turkish republic, founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1923, that such a case has been brought against a party of government, although three parties founded by Mr. Erbakan have already been banned.

Mr. Erbakan was due to begin his testimony on Nov. 11, but obtained an extra week in order to prepare his defence against new arguments put by Mr. Savas.

Mr. Erbakan became prime minister in June 1996 but his rule was marred by major disputes with the military hierarchy over creeping Islamisation in the country, and ended a year later following heavy pressure from the army.

He was replaced in June this year by the conservative Mesut Yilmaz, whose secular three-party coalition won a parliamentary confidence vote with the help of more than 30 defecting deputies who had earlier backed Mr. Erbakan's Islamist-led cabinet.

Luxor massacre survivors speak of horror

CAIRO (AFP) — Survivors of the Luxor massacre made plans to return home on Tuesday, some with the bodies of their loved ones, and described how a visit to Egypt's ancient temples turned to horror.

A Swiss woman told reporters she survived the attack by Islamists which left 69 tourists dead in the southern town of Luxor on Monday by smearing herself with the blood of a victim and pretending to be dead.

Rosemarie Dousse, one of the 25 injured, said she heard distant gunfire as she and other tourists got off their coach near the Queen Hatshepsut temple, one of Egypt's most popular tourist attractions, also known as Deir Al Bahri.

Armed men ordered the tourists to kneel and began firing, she said.

"A large man fell on top of me and a woman covered me too," Ms. Dousse said. "I only had my arm and leg showing, so they fired on those."

Ms. Dousse recounted how the men then opened fire a second time, killing wounded people with a single shot to the head, before fleeing with some young girls they managed to round up.

"I hid myself under the big man, soaked my head scarf in blood and smeared myself with it. My head was hidden and I didn't move," she said.

The terrorists kept coming back, singing, dancing, crying "Allah, Allah..." she said, adding that help was long in coming.

Witnesses said the assailants, believed to number at least six, sprayed the tourists with gunfire from assault rifles and used daggers when their bullets ran



Military soldiers carry the body of a terrorist after a shootout in the western bank of Luxor Monday. Suspected Islamists killed 69 tourists and 3 policemen in their deadliest attack in Egypt so far when they attacked an ancient temple in the valley of the Queens (Reuter photo)

out. "They were bloodthirsty, mad," said one witness.

Another witness said mothers tried to protect their children with their bodies. A five-year-old British girl was among the dead.

The director of the Maadi armed forces hospital in Cairo, said 14 of the wounded were treated in his facility. Four were in critical condition.

"The most critical is a Japanese man who has internal brain injuries and who was hit in the eye," Nabil Khallad told reporters.

"Seven of the patients are in good shape and can leave within 72 hours," he said, adding that among the wounded were 10 Swiss, a

German woman, the Japanese and two Egyptians.

According to the interior ministry, the confirmed dead were: 31 Swiss nationals, one French, one Bulgarian, eight Japanese, five Germans, four Britons and one from Colombia.

Four Egyptians, including two police officers, and the six assailants were also killed, the interior ministry said.

On Monday the interior ministry said 67 people were killed, including 57 tourists, in the attack.

Britain has confirmed the deaths of six Britons and Japan has said nine and possibly 10 of its nationals were killed in the attack. Germany on Monday gave four as the provisional number for its

victims.

The attack was the bloodiest since armed Islamists launched an anti-government campaign in March 1992. Among the Japanese victims were four honeymooning couples who were in a group of 11 — five couples and their guide.

Two of the honeymoon couples were killed outright, one man was left a widower with bullet wounds to the head and stomach and another man was dead with his new wife's fate as yet unknown.

Japan was planning to fly relatives of the casualties to Cairo on Wednesday, when most of the embassies were also expected to repatriate the wounded and the bodies of the victims.

Netanyahu wants to 'be like Arnold'

LOS ANGELES (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a dream — to be like movie super-hero Arnold Schwarzenegger. Or so he told the muscle-bound Schwarzenegger on Monday when the two met for a tour at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance. Reporters could not hear the full conversation between the two men, but they did overhear the embattled Netanyahu telling Schwarzenegger, "I've seen all your movies, maybe I should act like that." It was not clear which Schwarzenegger film Netanyahu was referring to: "Conan the Barbarian," "True Lies" or the "Terminator" series.

Dinner for three? That will be \$22,000, please

LONDON (R) — There is nothing unusual about three businessmen spending around \$370 on dinner in London's exclusive Le Gavroche restaurant. But very few rack up a wine bill of \$21,703 — and for good measure send back the most expensive bottle in the house because it was "a bit young." The final damage — \$22,076. "It's the best single bill I've seen from a small table in the 26 years I've been working here," manager Silvano Giraldin said. The highlight of the evening was a bottle of 1985 Romanée Conti, the most expensive on the list at \$8,347. But, "they thought the wine was a bit young so they asked us if we wanted to finish the bottle. We enjoyed ourselves. It was a perfect wine," said Giraldin.

Banker turns back on \$1.6 million salary to become priest

LONDON (AFP) — A leading London banker who earns more than \$1.6 million a year has turned his back on the world of high finance to become a Catholic priest, it was reported Tuesday. The Times said Jim O'Donnell, 36, chief executive officer at HSBC James Capel, originally from New York, had decided to leave his post in London to become a \$10,000-a-year priest, probably in the U.S. "There was general disbelief laughter. He is hardly known for being spiritual," a colleague was quoted as saying.

Stallone turns down record fee for film in his old style

LONDON (AFP) — Sylvester Stallone has turned down \$29 million, the biggest fee of his career, because he would be playing a tough guy again, the Sun tabloid reported Tuesday. "It's an action film and I think those kind of movies are dead and buried now," he was quoted as saying. "I'm not the greatest actor in the world but I want to be a little bit more versatile. I want to make films that stick in the memory a little longer than the time it takes to walk from your seat to the movie theatre." "If the right script came through me to play a homosexual, I wouldn't hesitate," he added.

Napoleon 'every night, Josephine' letter comes up for auction

PARIS (AFP) — A letter from Napoleon Bonaparte to his wife that seems to knock the "not tonight, Josephine" myth on the head comes up for auction in Paris Wednesday. "I have not spent a night without holding you in my arms," says the letter, part of a fine collection of Napoleonic mementoes which is expected to fetch around \$1 million. The items include manuscripts, paintings and furniture.

U.S. criticises Arab boycott of MENA economic forum

DUBAI (AFP) — U.S. Commerce Secretary William Daley criticised Arab states on Tuesday which boycotted the Middle East economic conference in Doha but said he was satisfied with the results of the forum.

"I am really disappointed at the boycott by some Arab states," Mr. Daley told reporters at an international airshow in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"I believe those who boycotted the conference have done a great favour for the parties which oppose peace in the region," said Mr. Daley, who flew in from the conference which was set to close on

Tuesday. But he was "pleased with the outcome" of the forum.

"The United States would like to see all the countries of the region working hand-in-hand for peace," he said.

Regional powerhouses Egypt and Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE and several other Arab nations, stayed away from the Middle East and North Africa economic conference because of Israel's participation.

They decided on the boycott because of the deadlock in the peace process, for which they blame Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr. Daley said Washington

was interested in boosting commercial links with the Gulf Arab countries, already among its biggest markets and its main oil suppliers.

"We are ready to work with this region to help it acquire technology and serve domestic development," he said.

His figures showed trade between the U.S. and the UAE exceeded \$2.5 billion in 1996. The level is set to grow to \$3 billion this year, the commerce secretary said.

Saudi Arabia is the biggest Middle East trading partner of the U.S., with a two-way exchange of more than \$10 billion a year.

Confirmed Somali death toll hits 1,265 as aid trickles in

BARDERA (AFP) — The confirmed death toll in flooding in southern Somalia rose to 1,265 Tuesday, but aid agencies still had only three small boats on the flooded Juba River a month after it burst its banks.

But more are on their way, and so are four helicopters, hired from South Africa after an appeal to governments around the world failed to produce any offers, though the Norwegian government is supplying 10 aluminium boats.

Catherine Bertini, the executive director of the World Food Programme, who arrived Monday in gumbos for a trip on the river, said donors had so far provided just under half of the \$10 million that aid agencies are seeking for this emergency.

"We've got to have funding now," she said at the river-side. "We'll stay as long as we need to."

Lynn Geldof, spokeswoman for the Somalia Inter-Agency Flood Response, said the figure of 1,265 dead was a body-count, "but we don't have figures from villages that are marooned."

More than 200,000 people have fled their submerged villages, and relief workers said Tuesday that the entire town of Beletwejn, on the Shabelle River, had been moved to a hillside.

At Bardera, midway down the Juba River, and where the airstrip is still functioning, tourist-boat drivers from Kenya take a few

blankets, plastic sheeting, boxes of high-protein biscuits and medicines to villages up and down the river in an outboard-powered dinghy.

At Marka, 10 kilometres upriver, the farms are silted over with up to a metre-and-a-half of mostly sand, and the sturdy little diesel-powered pumps which drew irrigation water from the Juba are buried.

The villagers at Marka who walk to the river to collect their supplies say they have little to eat, and that only five food storage pits remain intact to feed the 150 families there.

The floods destroyed 90 of their houses, they say.

Peter Rolfe, an agronomist working for the Italian agency Terra Nuova, produces a high-tech gadget little bigger than a pocket calculator — incongruous in this primitive area — and takes an instant reading from a satellite (for relaying later to the helicopter pilots) of the precise location of this village.

He says he needs to inspect the pits to see how much grain they contain, but that they usually hold between three and 15 tonnes.

"Once the rains stop," he says, "the villagers will need to dig out their pumps and change the oil."

Renato Marai, an agronomist with the U.N. World Food Programme, estimates that only 20 to 25 per cent of the storage pits in rain-fed areas have been destroyed, but that the grain

in most of those along the rivers is now inedible.

In this area, he says, there is no starvation, and no malaria yet because the water is still flowing fast.

Mr. Marai says relief agencies will have to feed the people of southern Somalia for four months or so, but that farmers will be able to plant soon after the rains stop. The rains are predicted to continue for at least a week.

Mr. Rolfe, who is analysing the deposited silt, says that some fields can be replanted as they are, but that the silt from others will have to be removed.

Aid agencies are working on the logistics of bringing food in fast — the four helicopters are due to start operating later this week — but concerned that an over-supply of free food would mean farmers would be unable to sell their crops next year.

"We have little tricks," says one of the boatmen. "If the people in a village say they have nothing to eat, we offer to buy food, with American dollars. Sometimes they offer us sacks of sorghum, but quite often they really don't have anything."

The deputy district commissioner of Bardera, Mohammad Sirad Omar, says the floods are the worst in living memory.

"People are very frightened," he told AFP.

Away from home, Netanyahu lashes out at Likud's 'very senior' mutineers

TEL AVIV (R) — A vexed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, lashing out at rebels in his ruling Likud, said a palace revolt brewing behind his back would fail in its goal of toppling him.

Burgeoning internal opposition exploded into open battle on Monday, as a high-profile Likud politician said "very senior" party figures, fed up with Mr. Netanyahu's leadership, were banding together to pull the political rug out from under him.

"No one said it's easy to be a prime minister," an anxious-sounding Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli reporters covering his current visit to the United States and Britain.

It was Mr. Netanyahu's first public response to the strife that party leaders have warned could drive the Likud from power.

"It's no secret that certain coalition members... don't particularly love me, they have their opinions, their ambitions, this isn't new," he said on Monday in Los Angeles.

But Mr. Netanyahu said he believed an "absolute majority" of his increasingly shaky coalition of lawmakers and ministers would "act responsibly, and not in the irresponsible manner some people did while the prime minister was

abroad." The beleaguered leader cut short his visit on Monday.

Aides indicated he was flying to London for a Tuesday meeting with King Hussein, Israel's warmest Arab peace partner until Mr. Netanyahu dispatched secret agents to Amman, where they attempted to kill a Hamas official.

Though Mr. Netanyahu's hardline policies have enraged the Arab World and alienated Israel's crucial ally Washington, the Likud crisis has little to do with ideology.

Two of Mr. Netanyahu's main adversaries in the revolt, former Cabinet Minister Benny Begin and former Netanyahu loyalist and present Minister Limor Livnat, outflank him to the right.

Another two, ousted Finance Minister Dan Meridor and Tel Aviv Mayor Roni Milo, anchor the party's left-wing.

Waiting in the wings to strive for the top spot is Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who has been known to swing both ways.

A perceived power grab by pro-Netanyahu forces at a riotous party convention last week set off the snowballing mutiny.

"We can't go on this way," Mr. Meridor told a special meeting of Likud leaders on Monday. "The Likud must

replace its chairman as prime minister."

"If Mr. Netanyahu continues to head the Likud, he will drag it down to the ground," added Mr. Begin.

Analysts said Mr. Netanyahu would likely ride out the present rebellion. But they said the prime minister's weakened position meant that crises to come would probably keep him from seeing his term through to its end in the year 2000.

"Netanyahu is in a very, very tough situation, and one that is growing worse," said columnist Amnon Denkmner. Political commentator Yaron Dekel said: "Netanyahu faces the most dangerous crisis since he was appointed prime minister."

Mr. Netanyahu became the first Israeli prime minister to be directly elected by voters when he defeated Shimon Peres in a hard-fought 1996 upset.

Under the new system, 80 votes in the 120 seat parliament are needed to force new elections for prime minister while allowing legislators to keep their seats.

This is seen as highly unlikely. More probable is a scenario in which 61 "no" votes cause the entire government to fall.

Mr. Netanyahu holds a slim, fractious six vote edge in the

house. A contentious December budget vote or no-confidence votes on peace moves could force new general elections.

Deputy Defence Minister Shalom cautioned fellow Likud figures that new elections would spell an opposition Labour win.

Labour leader Ehud Barak, well aware of the prime minister's woes, blamed him on Monday for the paralysis of Arab-Israeli peace moves.

"Netanyahu is leading us into a deadlock and possibly disaster," Mr. Barak said on a visit.

Mr. Shalom said Likud would be unable to field a new candidate to compete with former army chief Barak, even a popular figure like Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai.

"Whoever helps unseat Netanyahu at this time will bring about elections within 60 days, and in those elections Barak will win," Mr. Shalom said.

Mr. Barak, once neck and neck with Mr. Netanyahu in opinion polls, has opened a lead in recent weeks.

Mr. Milo pointed to a third scenario on Monday, in which as few as 12 Likud rebels could seize the party name and funding, leaving Mr. Netanyahu a party chairman without a party.

and very easy to destroy," Mr. Barak told reporters.

"If you can convince [Netanyahu] to take a double-U turn in his policies and behaviour," then Mr. Barak said he might consider joining a national unity government that Mr. Netanyahu hinted at during last week's memorial rally for slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Barak says Netanyahu leading Israel to possible disaster

INDIANAPOLIS (R) — The leader of Israel's opposition Labour Party on Monday echoed his Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in demanding Israel's security underscore any moves toward peace with the Palestinians, but he later criticised Benjamin Netanyahu for his policies.

Labour leader, Ehud Barak, told an audience of North American Jews that he could not support agreements with the Palestinians creating "insecure borders that are endless free-fire zones."

"The purpose of peace is the security of Israel... we will not trade security for peace," the long-time Israeli general said, adopting the same tenor as Mr. Netanyahu's speech to the same group the night before.

But in a news conference

after his address to the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, Mr. Barak placed responsibility for stalemate peace negotiations squarely on the prime minister.

"It is Bibi's baby," Mr. Barak told reporters, referring to Mr. Netanyahu by his nickname. "We feel Netanyahu is leading us into a deadlock and possibly disaster."

"A humiliated and coerced [Palestinian] President [Yasser] Arafat cannot be effective in striking at the terrorist elements" in the occupied Palestinian territories, he said. "For us, Arafat is not the ideal [negotiating] partner, but he is the real one."

He warned that the opportunity to reach a so-called "final settlement" with the Palestinians granting them

self-rule was limited, and must be achieved "before the next election."

Agreements with other Arab countries could follow, Mr. Barak said, unless Islamist governments that oppose peace with Israel come into power.

"Mutual trust [with the Arab countries] is a kind of substance that is very difficult to build and accumulate

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